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MAY 8, 2000 **Special Issue** $2.75 US/$3.75 CANADA

The Nation.

WE ARE NOT THE WORLD

A NEW VISION FOR FOREIGN POLICY

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LETTERS

LEFT BACK, LEFT OUT

Fresno, Calif.

■ Congratulations for having the courage to publish Susan Ohanian's "An Antisocial Idea" [March 6]. This is the type of information that needs to get out to the public. While politicians push social retention to make it look like they care about education, they fail to look at the consequences. More Ohanian! JEAN FENNACY

San Anselmo, Calif.

■ As an elementary school teacher, I commend Susan Ohanian. The social-promotion paranoia I see taking over my school district is frightening. Yes, we need to support children in their learning if they're struggling, but *no*, retaining them is not the way to do it—especially when the curriculum is becoming so standardized that they will get an exact repeat of what they didn't do well with the previous year!

TORRI CHAPPELL

Thermal, Calif.

■ As a sixth-grade language arts teacher, I must sadly concur with Susan Ohanian. Her comments regarding the urban poor also apply to the rural poor, particularly the large numbers of second-language learners. Under California's new get-tough policies, thirty-six of my eighty-five sixth graders in three classes are officially "at risk for retention." Such numbers prevail throughout the district. These are mostly Hispanic children of farmworkers. The state decrees that the testing that brought about this preposterous situation be conducted only in English. It gets worse. The law says we must offer remediation to these kids prior to failing them, but we have resources to serve only about a quarter of them with the stipulated after-school and summer-school programs. Meanwhile, our state per-student funding stands at a dismal fortieth place in the nation. MILES GULLINGSRUD

Ashland, Ore.

■ I agree with Susan Ohanian. Using test scores as the sole determinant of retention of students and of qualification of teachers and schools is shortsighted. As a retired school psychologist I have witnessed the devastating effects on children ordered to repeat a grade: embarrassment, fears of the taunts of other children, loss of self-respect and the conviction that they can't learn. The result is an aversion to school and a withdrawal from the learning process.

I tested children with academic difficulties and discovered that most of them were right-brain dominant. These children are more visually oriented; they process information holistically and are less attuned to individual details. Einstein was such a child. Children with different learning styles need innovative programs designed to teach to their particular strengths. For this group of children, the multiple-choice format of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is extremely confusing. Using these test scores as the sole determinant of retention is an injustice to the child, and it fails to examine and modify the reasons for failure. Since the tests have become the all-important determinant of success or failure, teachers are now spending most of their classroom time teaching how to pass the tests and neglecting true learning. JOHANNA FISHER

TESTING, TESTING

Brookline, Mass.

■ Alan Jenkins says ["Leveling the Playing Field," March 6] that the Educational Testing Service is *researching* techniques to adjust test scores for socioeconomic background. Winton Manning, a former vice president of ETS, developed these techniques in the late eighties, as Nicholas Lemann recounts in *The Big Test*. They are called Measure of Academic Talent scores. ETS suppressed the use of MAT, because it raises scores for poor and minority students and lowers scores for the children and grandchildren of typical *Nation* readers. CRAIG BOLON

YOU NEED *PROOF*!?

Sunnyside, Wash.

■ Regarding Peter Schrag's comment in the otherwise excellent "Education and the Election" [March 6] that calls for reducing class size are "a mantra beloved by both teachers and parents, despite its so-far unproven results," I ask the following question: How many 5-year-olds would you rather host at your child's birthday party, fifteen or thirty? TED B. RAIHL

DEATH TO CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Seattle

■ "Death Takes a Holiday" and Christopher Hitchens's and Katha Pollitt's columns in the March 6 issue were well stated and comprehensive. Hitchens correctly rebukes Governor Bush for asserting that none of the 100-plus prisoners executed during his tenure were innocent. I offer Bush the counter-example of David Spence, executed in 1997 despite statements of the cops who first investigated the crime that "nothing from the investigation ever led us to any evidence that he was involved."

There's an overwhelming need now for investigative journalists to look at any of the several dozen examples in the past two decades of executions of people who were probably innocent. Without media exposure of these cases, death penalty proponents will continue to assert smugly that no innocent person has been executed, knowing full well that this is a perfect Catch-22—for no mechanism exists in this country for formal exoneration after an execution. Meanwhile, Virginia prosecutors refuse to allow DNA testing of evidence that could help show that Joseph O'Dell, who was executed in 1997, was innocent, as he had claimed.

Two of the many other cases of executions of likely innocent prisoners include Jesse Tafero in Florida and Wayne Felker in Georgia. Tafero's co-defendant was freed on evidence that also would have exonerated Tafero if he hadn't already been executed. Felker was convicted with tampered and probably perjured evidence, and the state concealed massive amounts of evidence favorable to Felker, including another suspect's confession.

Wrong convictions are a rampant problem. Readers may be interested in *Justice: Denied* magazine, which examines these issues, at www.justicedenied.org. WILLIAM KREUTER

Washington Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

Chicago

■ The Illinois Death Penalty Moratorium Project has been enlisting thousands of Illinois citizens to work for a moratorium since 1997. On January 27, the project presented the testimony of a wide array of citizens (from mothers of wrongfully convicted death row inmates to representatives of the posh Union League Club of Chicago) in support of a moratorium bill Representative Coy Pugh had introduced before the Illinois House Judiciary Committee. After hearing testimony that brought some of its members to tears, the committee decided to postpone its vote on the bill to await Governor Ryan's expected public statement on the question. The Moratorium Project then mobilized its members to inundate the Governor's office with calls and faxes urging the imposition of a moratorium. On January 31, Governor Ryan heeded the call, and he announced his historic decision.

Your editorial, "Death Takes a Holiday," rightly cautions that "Illinois could, after a few token hearings and reports, decide to resume killing." However, the Moratorium Project is encouraged to believe that this will not be the case. In announcing the moratorium, Governor Ryan made clear his intention to appoint a commission representative of Illinois's diverse citizenry with a mandate to study all aspects of Illinois's flawed system and with the authority to make any ultimate recommendation, including abolition. The Governor placed no artificial time limit on the commission's completion of its task. If the Governor keeps to his word, there is every reason to believe that the commission to be created by the Governor will reach a fair and just conclusion.

The Illinois Moratorium Project's task now

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EDITORIALS

A17 and Counting

The thousands of protesters who danced, marched and, in a few cases, got clubbed by police as they tried to shut down the meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Washington can claim a measure of success. The meetings did proceed, but it was by no means global-financial business as usual; the finance ministers and delegates had to be ferried to their meetings before dawn under police guard. Thanks to the protests on April 16 and 17, and to those focusing on debt relief and trade that preceded them, unprecedented public light was cast upon the deliberations and policies of two agencies that are usually allowed a free hand.

Six months ago, the establishment refused even to acknowledge that its view of the world might be flawed; it responded to all questions with a simple-minded mantra: more trade good, no trade bad. After Seattle the line shifted to sanctimonious denunciations of hooligans—labor goons, flat-earthers, Luddite wackos. That didn't hold because it was so obvious that the "mob" was composed of informed and concerned citizens, including many young idealists. Next, the pundit cheerleaders preachily explained that, while many protesters are no doubt well intentioned, they don't understand that they are actually hurting the poor. Lately, the new line is: Some activists are virtuous (church folks, high-minded enviros), but the rest are dangerous, self-interested protectionists. Finally, in DC, something approaching an admission of error could be heard—as for example when a committee of the IMF board of governors noted that its policies have become the object of "a growing public debate" about the direction of the international financial system and concern that the benefits of globalization "are not reaching everyone." This is more evasion, of course, but still, it's significant progress in tearing down the facade.

It was heartening, in the rain and military-style lockdown atmosphere of Washington, to see thousands of activists—large numbers of college-age Americans with a fair sprinkling of protesters from overseas, including environmentalists from India and Nigeria, Chinese dissidents and church leaders from Latin America—protesting the dark side of international capitalism, particularly those decisions made in the capital of the richest country in the world. It was also heartening to glimpse the possibility—although it's a long way off and will require much more than a few days of joint protests—that the process set in motion will unite students, union members, environmentalists and the religious community into a true movement. "You are demonstrating that there is an alternative to the cruel corporate vision of the future," AFL-CIO president John Sweeney told a rally two days before the beginning of the IMF protests. He added, "We are surprising not only the politicians and the press but also ourselves."

Evidence of the power of that effort was not long in coming. Only days after 15,000 union members and supporters rallied on Capitol Hill to demand that lawmakers not cave in to President Clinton's desire to see China admitted to the World Trade Organization, House Democratic leader Richard Gephardt announced that he will oppose that effort. Echoing the concerns of the protesters, Gephardt based his opposition on his belief that

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The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the second week in January, and biweekly the third week of July through the third week of September) by The Nation Company, L.P. © 2000 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, L.P., 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. International Telex: 667 155 NATION. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149, or call 1-800-333-8536. Subscription Price: 1 year, $52; 2 years, $90. Add $18 for surface mail postage outside U.S. **Please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions.** Back issues $4 prepaid ($5 foreign) from: The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. The Nation is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149. This issue went to press on April 19. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

INTERNET: Selections from The Nation are available on Thursday by 12:00 midnight Eastern Time, at www.thenation.com
E-MAIL: info@thenation.com. Letters to the Editor: letters@thenation.com.

the measure would reduce US influence on China's behavior on human rights, religious tolerance and the environment. Whether or not Gephardt's decision dooms a bill to give China permanent most-favored-nation status, it is being viewed as a major victory for the DC protesters. Similarly, it was clear that the announcement of a new World Bank initiative on AIDS was a response to the criticisms being raised in the streets. Seattle may have shut down the WTO, but the DC action could be said to have put global justice squarely on America's agenda.

As the protesters descended on DC, leaders of the world's poorest nations, the G77, gathered for a summit at which resolutions were proposed emphasizing the shared concerns of the protesters and those on the receiving end of neoliberal policies. One called for the forgiveness of poor countries' debt; another urged that the United Nations take over some decision-making from groups like the IMF that are controlled by rich nations. Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo told the group that the failure to reform international aid policies that have maintained the wealth gap between rich and poor countries constitutes "a major threat to international peace and security."

As the DC protests drew to a close, the talk was largely, Where next? Some activists were drawing up plans for another massing of forces at the Democratic convention in August; others were looking farther ahead to the September meeting of the IMF and World Bank in Prague. But it's also important to ask, What next? Although protests are useful, they will not themselves alter global capitalism. They are a strategy, a means of helping to shatter the wrongheaded consensus and open up space for new thinking, but they are not a program for change. As the veterans of Seattle and DC plan their next encounter, they—we—must ponder the questions to which no one, right now, has all the answers: How do we strengthen and expand the blue-green alliance? How do we make common cause with working people the world over? What sort of international financial system do we want to see, and how can we insure its fairness and stability? How do we insert this agenda into campaign 2000, and what strategy do we devise to carry the battle into the next Congress? The battles of Seattle have only begun.

Welfare Movement Rises

The federal law that gave us "welfare reform" expires in September 2002. Inevitably, Republicans and Democrats will compete to claim it a success, pointing to the fact that the number of people on public assistance rolls has plummeted to half its peak level of 1994. A closer look, however, suggests a disaster in the making. The numbers are down partly because the new law freed the states to simply slash families from the rolls, pushing poor women into any kind of work—or no work at all. At the same time, states were allowed to set up all sorts of barriers so that getting on welfare has become a herculean feat. Even in a booming economy, the poverty rate has changed little from the last peak in the business cycle, and the poorest single-mother households have actually lost ground. What will happen when the economy slows?

The new restrictiveness is spilling over into other programs associated with welfare; millions of poor families are also losing

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Medicaid and food stamps, sometimes in clear violation of federal law. Meanwhile, the states are sitting on surplus federal funds that accumulate as caseloads decline. At least six states are using these funds to pay for tax cuts or general fund programs. Hardly any of the surplus is finding its way into childcare, training or education, or into transportation subsidies that might make low-wage work more manageable for poor families.

The big question is, Why the silence? Where is the protest? Where are the advocates? And where are the poor themselves?

In fact, it's not as quiet as it seems. Below the radar screen of press and politicians, scores of grassroots groups are waging fights at the local and state level to expose the realities of welfare reform and the low-wage labor market. There was much less resistance when what some call "welfare deform" was legislated in 1996, perhaps because the cutbacks had been threatened for so long and the results had not yet hit home. But as the new policies began to bite, local protests emerged—over the irrationality of yanking poor women out of college to sweep the streets in abusive workfare programs or of cutting paltry cash grants to punish families for breaking any of the new and mindless rules that welfare departments are generating.

Grassroots organizations are not just waging a low-intensity war of resistance. They are also promoting model policies that might lay the groundwork for a new national legislative agenda, including expanded health insurance, childcare subsidies, public jobs programs and living-wage ordinances. In New York City, Community Voices Heard and other low-income groups pushed through a public jobs bill over Mayor Giuliani's veto, and in California, ACORN is close to winning a public jobs commitment from Los Angeles County. The Maine Association of Independent Neighborhoods and its partners won the Parents as Scholars program, which allows college attendance to count as work while "stopping the clock" for women in school. Such initiatives have also succeeded elsewhere, and Washington State's Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition is fighting for similar reforms. In Rhode Island, Ocean State Action Fund had a breakthrough victory in 1998 with the first expansion of the Medicaid program, giving a greater number of poor parents eligibility for health insurance; since then, nearly a dozen states have followed suit. And organizations affiliated with the Gamaliel Foundation grassroots network have won model transportation policies throughout the Midwest, increasing mobility, income and opportunity for low-income families.

There are signs that these local efforts are coalescing into a national movement, prodded by the prospect of a renewed Congressional debate over welfare reform. Thanks in part to the Internet, local groups have been communicating with one another from the start of this new fight, and now organizations from sixty-five cities and thirty-five states have joined the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, a coalition led by low-income women and men (to join: www.nationalcampaign.org).

The campaign is advancing a first-things-first agenda, calling for restoration of the federal income-security system (including benefits for immigrants) and better wages and supports for low-wage workers, including guaranteed healthcare and childcare. A founding convention in Chicago on May 6 is bringing together more than 1,000 delegates to announce the coalition in meetings and on the streets—and to plan a series of campaigns to change the national debate. The idea is to expand and publicize the local and state work that has already been going on, drawing in more grassroots groups and developing alliances with other progressives.

Now may be the right time for poor people to re-enter national politics. A multifaceted movement seems to be emerging to challenge the corporate-reactionary alliance that has dominated the United States for the past two decades. The poor pay the heaviest price for that domination. They should be in the lead of the movement that dislodges it.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN

Frances Fox Piven, who is on the faculty of the Graduate School of the City University of New York, is the author, with Richard Cloward, of the forthcoming Why Americans Don't Vote *(Beacon).*

The Pinochet Ricochet

Retired intelligence agent Tomás Ricardo Anderson Kohatsu is not internationally known, as is Chile's Gen. Augusto Pinochet, but in his native Peru his reputation as a psychopathic torturer is notorious. He could have become the first foreigner to be prosecuted in the United States for torture if the State Department hadn't intervened and assured his safe passage back home.

The case against Anderson is solid. Fellow army intelligence agent Leonor La Rosa Bustamante fingered Anderson and several lower-level officials. Raped, beaten and prodded with electric shocks for having allegedly leaked sensitive information, La Rosa was left permanently disabled. In addition, extensive testimony provided to a Peruvian government commission reviewing cases of innocent people jailed on terrorism charges also implicates Anderson in acts of torture. Retired Gen. Rodolfo Robles, who has earned the wrath of the Peruvian military for revealing information on human rights abuses, claims that Anderson was among those who attempted to kidnap and disappear him in 1996.

Hence the shock of human rights groups when the Peruvian government's unidentified witness in a case presented on March 6 before the OAS's Washington-based Inter-American Commission on Human Rights turned out to be Anderson, who was brought as a character witness to discredit the testimony of Luisa Zanatta, another former army intelligence agent, on widespread wiretapping by the Peruvian intelligence services. (Zanatta, now in exile in Miami, also implicated Anderson in the La Rosa case.) The commission sat in stunned silence while Anderson gave his testimony. After the session, a Peruvian OAS official called Lima on his cell phone and announced, "Mission accomplished."

The mission, however, was not over yet. Peruvian and US-based human rights groups immediately petitioned the Justice Department to arrest Anderson under the Torture Victim Protection Act, which allows for the extraterritorial prosecution of torturers. An international convention also establishes extraterritorial jurisdiction over torturers. On March 9, as Anderson's plane was about to depart Houston, FBI agents detained him for questioning while Justice Department lawyers deliberated as to whether

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they had probable cause to issue an arrest warrant. They decided that they did. Human rights activists involved in the case were elated. Then the State Department intervened.

In consultation with State Department lawyers and under pressure from Peruvian officials, Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering (in charge while Madeleine Albright traveled abroad) determined that Anderson enjoyed diplomatic immunity, precluding legal action against him. But Anderson is not a diplomat and was traveling on a visa that did not allow for diplomatic immunity. According to constitutional lawyers, the 1975 OAS-US agreement cited by State Department officials as part of their justification for their decision applies only to OAS diplomats residing in Washington, which Anderson clearly was not. In short, Pickering let politics take precedence over law, and Anderson was released at 3 AM on March 10.

Justice's willingness to prosecute in this case sets an important precedent. Moving beyond the principles established in the Pinochet case, Justice signaled that not only notorious heads of state or high-level officials but also those who do their dirty work can face prosecution abroad. Finally, an important message was sent to the Peruvian government that its torturers and other human rights violators may not be welcome in the United States.

By overriding the Justice Department, Pickering made a mockery of the State Department's alleged commitment to human rights and international human rights organizations. What credibility can US officials have in advocating harsh condemnation of Cuba and other countries before the United Nations Human Rights Commission when the State Department has ignored domestic and international law to avoid a politically uncomfortable situation? What credibility can the US government have advocating prosecution of those who have committed human rights atrocities in Bosnia or Rwanda when it fails to prosecute those who end up within its own borders? If the United States was not willing to enforce the law in this cut-and-dried case, can it enforce the law in a future case? And what credibility does it have criticizing setbacks to democracy in Peru under the authoritarian government of Alberto Fujimori when it puts one of its most feared agents of repression back on the streets of Lima? COLETTA A. YOUNGERS

Coletta A. Youngers is a senior associate specializing in the Andean region of South America at the Washington Office on Latin America.

FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS

The hoary saw of Senator Arthur Vandenberg that politics stops at the water's edge is being revived fifty years later with an ironic twist. Now it seems to mean that there is a tacit cutoff point in the political dialogue to exclude foreign policy. This special issue, edited by Kai Bird, was conceived in part to fill that vacuum. It is also an ambitious effort at global repositioning—a progressive redefinition of the US role in the post–cold war world.

A decade after the fall of the Berlin wall, many cold war structures and mindsets remain in place, and progress in dismantling them has proceeded at far too sluggish a pace. Certainly the world hasn't been standing still. Globalization has thrust to the fore new issues of labor and human rights, the environment and world poverty, which the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have shown themselves incapable of handling. While the nuclear menace reached a real flashpoint in South Asia, the Senate was rejecting the nuclear test ban treaty and thus any leverage over India and Pakistan. Yet neither Clinton nor Gore plans to attend the upcoming Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty review. The ratification of Start II by the Russian Parliament opens the way for another round of talks for more comprehensive nuclear disarmament. Can this be achieved while the United States pursues the chimera of a limited missile defense system? The questions of humanitarian intervention and, specifically, the US role in UN peacekeeping efforts, beginning with the United States paying its past-due assessments, must be aired.

There have been positive movements as well on which candidates should be articulating their views. How does our next President intend to enforce and build on the "Pinochet precedent" for dealing with heads of state who violate human rights? The international tribunal trying crimes of genocide in Bosnia has been broadening its ambit to implicate the leaders who ordered the crimes. What do the candidates think about strengthening this institution and joining the International Criminal Court?

The corporate domination of political discourse, greased by unregulated campaign financing, fosters a pseudo-globalism that supports an international economic order based on inequity and private gain. Neither candidate shows any sign that he opposes this vision. They have a lot of explaining to do.

One for the Professoriate

After years of being told they can't form unions because they're management, as course loads have mounted and corporate-style administrations have proliferated, private college teachers have finally gotten a break. The New York regional office of the National Labor Relations Board ruled in November that the lecturers and professors at Manhattan College, a private Catholic institution, who are seeking to form a local of the American Federation of Teachers and to win the right to bargain with the college, are employees and not managers.

To professors who have had colleges slap wage freezes on them while deans, provosts and presidents reject the hiring and tenure recommendations of faculty committees, that might have seemed painfully obvious, but for two decades it hasn't been the law. Since 1980, when the Supreme Court ruled that faculty at Yeshiva University in New York City should be considered management, unions have been stopped dead in their tracks in efforts to organize faculty at private colleges and universities.

The eighties were bad years for unions at the NLRB, with the Reagan/Bush–appointed board headed for much of that time by

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Don Dotson (later senior vice president of Beverly Enterprises, the nursing-home chain that developed a cost-benefit analysis of ways to violate federal labor laws). During those years the board took every opportunity to build on the *Yeshiva* decision, rejecting all efforts by private college and university faculty to form unions.

Now, with the Manhattan College case, there is an opening again for college unionization efforts. The Manhattan College faculty held a union election this past December, but the ballots will remain sealed while the college's appeal of the Northeast regional NLRB decision is pending. The national NLRB can either refuse the appeal and order the December ballots unsealed or accept the appeal and issue its own ruling in the case—a ruling that union activists say would be very likely to favor the union.

The current NLRB appears to be willing to challenge the *Yeshiva* precedent in cases where it is clear that faculties have only advisory authority over their working conditions. Ellen Schrecker, a professor of history at Yeshiva and editor of the American Association of University Professors' journal *Academe*, praised the regional board's decision. "It's about time we began to roll back the unrealistic *Yeshiva* ruling, which portrayed a highly exploited group of faculty members as management even though they had almost no control over their working conditions," she says. Adds Pat Shaw, head of the AAUP's collective bargaining, "This ruling opens the door to more private college organizing, but you have to remember that academic managements are no better than J.P. Stevens." Shaw notes that there is still a conservative majority on the Supreme Court, which limits how far the NLRB can go to enable private college faculties to organize. "What is really needed is a Congress that will pass legislation repealing the Supreme Court's *Yeshiva* decision, so that private college academics would have the same right to organize as public university faculties have. Then you'd have a tidal wave of campus organizing," says Shaw.

The big question at this point at Manhattan College is how the long-delayed union election turned out. When the ballots are unsealed, will the union have won?

"It's hard to predict how it will go," says Joe Fahey, a professor of religious studies and the main organizer on the campus. "The college delayed this vote for three years from the time we initially gathered the union cards and asked for an election. That's a long time to wait."

DAVE LINDORFF

Dave Lindorff, a Philadelphia-based freelance journalist, is at work on a book about the Mumia Abu-Jamal case for Common Courage Press.

In Fact...

FREE SPEECH AT BENNINGTON

Is Bennington College president Elizabeth Coleman "a serial violator of academic freedom with no respect for her faculty, no respect for difference of opinion, and a pathologically vindictive personality"? That's what Bennington philosophy professor (and *Nation* contributor) Carlin Romano said in an interview in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in March. A few weeks later, Coleman showed he was right: She fired him. A spokesman for the college said the idea that Romano was fired "because he's been opposing the administration is absolutely absurd"; he was fired for failing to turn in student evaluations on time. (Romano is barred from speaking publicly about the incident on pain of forcible eviction from his campus apartment.) Coleman abolished tenure at the school in 1994 and fired twenty-six of the college's seventy-nine professors. In place of tenure, Bennington now has multiyear contracts with all faculty members. Romano was sacked before the expiration of his contract in June 2001. Coleman did not renew the contracts of two other professors who questioned some of her decisions, and another instructor who criticized her has resigned. The trend at colleges and universities everywhere is to reduce the number of tenured faculty and replace them with instructors on limited-term contracts who are easier to fire. Academic freedom is usually understood to protect professors' expression of unpopular ideas in the classroom. The Romano case shows that clearcutting has come to the Groves of Academe.

ARCHIVE, TERKEL HONORED

Those forensic historians at the National Security Archive have finally been recognized by the journalistic community for their unique contribution to excavating the long-hidden history of US foreign policy through the declassification of secret records. The archive, a nongovernmental documentation center located at George Washington University, was given a George Polk Award "for serving as an essential journalistic resource"—the first time in recent memory the award has gone to a public interest organization. The archive's exposés of the hidden history of Pinochet (some of which appeared in *The Nation*), Guatemala, Henry Kissinger and nuclear weapons were cited as examples of "resourcefulness and courage in journalism." Another Polk Award winner—for lifetime achievement—was *Nation* contributor and friend Studs Terkel.

CLINTON'S BET

President Clinton brags at $10,000-a-ticket fundraisers that he eliminated "hundreds of programs" without causing any disruptions. He challenges audiences to name one of those programs and says if anyone can, he'll refund the price of their ticket. OK, how about "welfare reform" (see Frances Fox Piven's editorial on page 4)? Next time you're at a $10,000 fundraiser, raise your hand and say that the 1996 act eliminated AFDC, kicked people off welfare after five years, phased out $24 billion in food stamp spending and slashed food stamps for childless unemployed. Donate your $10,000 to your local welfare rights group.

A 'MUZZLE' TO GREG WHITE

The Thomas Jefferson Center has given a Thomas Jefferson Muzzle award to Gregory White, the Ohio prosecutor who nabbed Cynthia Stewart for taking photographs of her daughter in the bath (see editorial last week). The free-speech organization hands out annual awards to perpetrators of egregious or ridiculous acts of censorship. Other winners: Rudy Giuliani, Bill Clinton (for "don't ask, don't tell") and a school superintendent who censored a painting of Washington crossing the Delaware because he mistook George's watch fob for "an exposed part of Washington's anatomy."

NEWS OF THE WEAK IN REVIEW

Texas health commissioner Dr. William Archer III, son of Representative Bill Archer, told Adam Clymer of the *New York Times* that Hispanic girls are to blame for the state's high teenage-pregnancy rate. That's because of cultural differences, he said: Hispanics don't believe that "getting pregnant is a bad thing." Archer did not say why the white teen-pregnancy rate is nearly as high as the Hispanic. As for Texas's low rate of health insurance coverage—it ranks next to last in the nation—Dr. Archer said he didn't think insurance made all that much difference to people's health.

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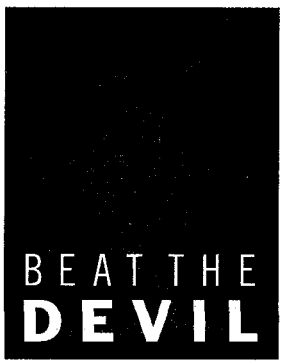
ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Low-Power Radio: Mayday! Mayday!



Trust the broadcasting industry to recoil in horror at the prospect of more choice for the American people, who—be it never forgotten—actually own the airwaves this same broadcasting industry claims as its own.

In a shameful vote on April 13, just before the Easter recess and after furious lobbying by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), the House of Representatives voted 274 to 110 to scuttle one of the few creditable rulings issued in recent years by the Federal Communications Commission. If the Senate concurs, Congress will have issued a stark No to free speech and democratic communications, just as ruthlessly as any dictator sending troops into a broadcasting station. The broadcasting lobby has been on a rampage ever since the FCC voted on January 20 to authorize license applications for noncommercial FM stations to begin low-power broadcasting to their communities. Such stations, with a range of up to ten miles, would be able to get on the air for as little as $1,000.

The FCC's January ruling came as a welcome surprise amid the pell-mell concentration of station ownership prompted by the 1996 Telecommunications Act. The FCC acted partly to show it's not an industry serf, partly to head off the possibility of court rulings endorsing low-watt radio on free-speech grounds. The very same day as the House vote, April 13, the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit gave a friendly hearing to low-watt pioneer Steve Dunifer, who has been battling the FCC in court for many years.

Even so, the FCC did bow to industry pressure on a technical question of enormous importance, the issue of "separation requirements." Old FCC rules required three separations between one FM station and another. This meant that if a station is broadcasting on, say, 91.1 another broadcaster couldn't grab 91.3, 91.5 or 91.7. The next available frequency would be 91.9. This effectively meant that the only FM frequencies available to new low-power stations were in virtually uninhabited regions of the country, mostly desert.

Technology has changed greatly since those old rules were made, and by the new millennium the FCC was prepared to move to a separation requirement of one, regarded by independent communications engineers as quite sufficient to preserve the integrity of existing FM signals. But finally the FCC flinched in the face of fierce NAB pressure, and its January 20 ruling called for a separation requirement of two, meaning that there would be no new low-watt stations operating legally in cities like New York, Los Angeles or San Francisco.

But this still wasn't enough for the broadcasting industry. Even as the FCC ruling prompted hundreds of excited nonprofit groups to ready their license applications, NAB lobbyists began to deploy across Capitol Hill. To befuddled lawmakers these lobbyists played an utterly fraudulent CD purporting to show the chaos on the airwaves that would be caused by the new two-separation requirement. Engineers from the FCC and from legal, church and community groups came to hearings and demonstrated the fraudulence of the NAB's claims. But by now lawmakers were being pressed by an NAB ally, formerly furtive but now brazen in its stance: National Public Radio.

Kevin Klose, president of NPR, stated flatly in a recent *Radio World* broadcast that "the American public would not be well served by an FCC ruling that creates LPFM [low-power FM] at the expense of the existing public radio services." Klose has good reason to be afraid. Ever since NPR forced its affiliates to accept nationally syndicated NPR programming, the proportion of locally originated and community-oriented programming on these public radio stations has plummeted, and many listeners are discontented. Low-power FM is a threat to the NPR empire.

There's another, more sinister factor in NPR's opposition. Both Klose and the boss of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Robert Coonrod, come from careers in US government propaganda abroad. Klose ran Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, long a stamping ground for the CIA. Coonrod oversaw the Voice of America and both Radio and TV Martí. As Peter Franck of the National Lawyers Guild's Committee on Democratic Communications puts it, "Klose and Coonrod come out of the national security state. Their instinct is to see federally funded public radio as an actual or potential propaganda arm of government, and they're terrified of independent voices." Indeed, Coonrod has been intimately involved in efforts to curb the independence of stations in the noncommercial Pacifica network, which is now the object of an admirable strike by *Pacifica Network News* reporters.

The awful April 13 House vote came as the consequence of a deal between Republican Michael Oxley and Democrat John Dingell, whereby the FCC will be forced to revert to the old three-separation requirement, which would mean no more than seventy low-watt stations nationwide, all of them in the boonies. The FCC's two-separation requirement of January would have allowed for about 1,000 low-watt stations. The bill piously calls for new studies by the FCC but is emphatic that the commission can never change separation requirements without Congressional authority.

The battle is far from over. Even though the broadcasting industry has great clout, the low-power-radio movement has popular sentiment on its side, having fought for ten years with ultimate success to prompt the FCC to that January ruling. The Senate will vote on the issue in early May, and it's vital that legislators hear from communities, churches and labor as soon as possible. The White House favors the FCC's January decision. The Senate version of the bill will come before John McCain's commerce committee, so write to him and inquire whether he really is a reformer. Also write to your senators and their home district staff. Among other organizations to contact: the National Lawyers Guild's Committee on Democratic Communications at (415) 522-9814; the Prometheus Radio Project at (215) 476-2385; and the Low Power Radio Coalition at (202) 783-5588. ■

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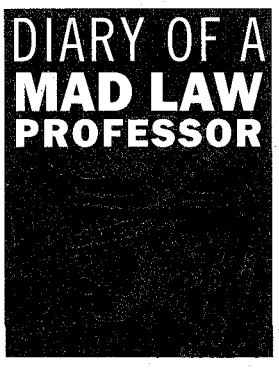
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Altered States, or, A Work of Scientific Fiction



Chapter One. In Which I Am Elevated by Grand Sentiment: "Where Descartes's search for certainty leads him to conclude: I think therefore I am, Williams demonstrates…that I am where I am thought by, and think, the other." [Barbara Johnson, *The Feminist Difference*, Harvard University Press, p. 182]

Chapter Two. In Which a Letter From a Friend Reveals That I Have Been Canonized in Section I, Verbal Questions 21–31 of Test Preparation Materials for the SAT: "Dear Pat, Here's the SAT sample question that my daughter was given." She goes on to quote the question, of which this is the relevant part:

> This passage is from a book by an African American woman who is a law professor: "I have been focussing on the ways in which gender affects individuals' perspectives—gender in this instance having less to do with the biology of male and female than with the language of power relations, of dominance and submission, of assertion and deference, of big and little…."

My friend's letter continues: "Curiously, they actually altered your passage from page 12 of *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*. For example, they substitute 'language' for 'semiotics' of power relations, they eliminated 'semantic,' and omitted the whole phrase 'as well as gender issues specifically based in biology….' But by simplifying the passage, I guess they can suggest a 'right' answer a little more readily." [Letter from Lori, February 19, 1999]

Chapter Three. In Which I Discover I Have Been Misquoted: E.R. Shipp has written a column about police brutality in which she cites New York University Law Professor Derrick Bell, who has written: "Columbia Law School Professor Patricia Williams has written: 'White America wishes that blacks would just go away and shut up and stop taking up so much time and food and air, and then the world would return to its Norman Rockwell loveliness.'" [E.R. Shipp, "A Backdrop of Pain and Anger," New York *Daily News*, April 3, 2000]

Chapter Four. In Which My Refined Sensibilities Are Subjected to a Vicious Volley of Unwarranted Slings and Parturient Arrows: "Dear Hypocrite, Saw you quoted in The Daily News. You are a reverse racist. If you %#@& don't like white people, why don't you go back to the jungles of Africa and try complaining under Communism." [Composite missive whose principled fictionalization will no doubt generate controversy among my objectivist colleagues in the legal profession.]

Chapter Five. In Which I Attempt to Set the Record Straight: "To the Editor: It has come to my attention that I was misquoted in E.R. Shipp's otherwise wonderful column of April 3. In an article appearing in *The Nation*, July 10, 1995, about capital punishment and the risks to democracy of sensationalized and racialized vengeance-seeking of the sort to be heard on 'shock jock' talk radio, I wrote: 'One of racism's many manifestations is…the wish that black people would just go away and shut up and stop, etc, etc….' Nowhere did I attribute that belief to white people generally—and most particularly not in the context of New Yorkers' unusually broadly shared concern about Mayor Giuliani's responses to excessive and deadly police force." [Letter submitted to *Daily News*, April 10, 2000]

Chapter Six. In Which the Marvelous Mechanisms of the Cyberkinetics Insure That I Am Widely Interpreted: "Dear Professor Williams, Read of your opinions on the World Wide Web. Correction: White people do not wish that black people would stop eating and breathing. On behalf of whites here in Atlanta, I think it is fair to say we just wish you would stay in your own neighborhoods." [Completely made-up missive. It just came to me in a vision.]

Chapter Seven. In Which Derrick Bell Commiserates About This Unfortunate Episode: "Sorry for not getting all the quote. Still, it has real punch and reflects, I fear, how a great many whites, even in this 'enlightened age,' really feel. This is strange because I really do not think the society would survive without us as the designated 'other.'" [E-mail of April 12, 2000]

Chapter Eight. In Which I Am Edified by Great Thoughts: "It is one thing to suspect that law is indeterminate, but it is quite another to grasp exactly how that indeterminacy works in specific contexts." [Professor Mari Matsuda, "Looking To The Bottom," in *Critical Race Theory*, The New Press, p. 64]

Chapter Nine. In Which an Inquiry Reveals That I Am to Be Canned as Well as Canonized: "Dear Prof. Williams, In a recent Law School Admission Test, a reading passage noted that: 'Legal scholars such as Patricia Williams, Derrick Bell and Mari Matsuda have sought empowerment for [those who are not fluent in the language of the law] through the construction of alternative legal narratives.' The passage is followed by eight multiple-choice questions. I have found one of these questions to be of interest. It asks: 'The passage suggests that Williams, Bell, and Matsuda would most likely agree with which one of the following statements regarding personal stories? (A) Personal stories are more likely to adhere to the principles of objectivism than are other forms of discourse. (B) Personal stories are more likely to de-emphasize differences in background and training than are traditional forms of legal discourse. (C) Personal stories are more likely to restore tranquility to the legal establishment than are more adversarial forms of discourse. (D) Personal stories are more likely to lead to the accurate reconstruction of facts than are traditional forms of legal narrative. (E) Personal stories are more likely to be influenced by a person's expectations, values and beliefs than are other forms of discourse.'

"As you can see, this question offers an unusual situation for the study of the LSAT.… I'm sure you never thought you would be asked to answer another LSAT question for the rest of your life, but as you are one of three uniquely qualified persons to answer the questions posed, I would greatly appreciate your thoughtful response." [Letter from David White, head of a testing preparation service, December 16, 1999] ■

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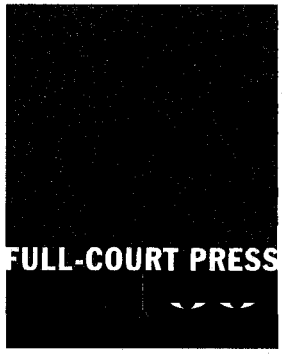
ERIC ALTERMAN

The 'Shame' Game



When we last visited *New York Times* foreign affairs pundit Thomas Friedman during last year's Seattle protests, he was attacking critics of the antidemocratic World Trade Organization as a "Noah's ark of flat-earth advocates, protectionist trade unions and yuppies looking for their 1960's fix" who had been "duped" by pro-fascist presidential candidate Pat Buchanan. But we flat-earth yuppies needn't feel too bad. Friedman is an equal-opportunity insulter. He also calls right-wing critics of globalism "isolationists without high-school degrees" and "moronic politicians." Given his penchant for insult, one is tempted to term him the Howard Stern—or at least the Don Rickles—of the Council on Foreign Relations set.

Friedman tends to treat all political and ideological adversaries with the same patience and empathy that his former colleague Abe Rosenthal demonstrated toward the PLO. This is unfortunate, for he occupies some of the most influential real estate in journalism and is devoting himself to one of the most important debates the country can have right now. For the global elites who live in what Benedict Anderson termed the "imagined community" of the *New York Times* (and *International Herald Tribune*), Friedman, more than anyone, is defining the new rules of the road.

Readers of his column and his recent manifesto, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, will be aware that Friedman has cast himself as the full-throated town crier of the new global village. The scourge of trade barriers everywhere, he rarely bothers to distinguish between those who seek to protect sunset industries, defend indigenous cultures, strengthen labor protections or preserve rainforests. Friedman says he believes that social democracy is just as necessary as open markets to peace and prosperity. "You have to bring the have-nots and know-nots into the game," he told me. "Morally, it's wrong not to, and politically, it's shortsighted." Lately, moreover, he says his thinking on the question of WTO (and A16) protesters has evolved. He now says, "Without activist protesters, neither governments nor corporations will be pushed to value the environment." But he insists that these same activists "have the power, and the responsibility, to create coalitions—with business, government and affected communities—that don't just make a point but make a difference."

Friedman is very particular about what kinds of trade agreements he likes and what kinds he doesn't, and he doesn't brook any differences of opinion. When the AFL-CIO, led by the textile workers' union UNITE, recently came out against a NAFTA-like bill for Africa called the African Growth and Opportunity Act, Friedman let loose with a neutron bomb of rhetorical abuse in three separate columns. He called the opposition a "travesty," a "source of shame for all Americans," which, if successful, will "be an ugly stain on the US labor movement that will highlight all the unions' phony-baloney assertions in Seattle." Friedman then went on to imply that union leaders and other opponents of the bill would prefer to see 290 million Africans starve to death—or die of AIDS—than rethink their stupid, outdated-but-occasionally-self-serving-in-the-short-term protectionist ideology.

But if the bill, which contains harsh eligibility rules that will force African nations to alter their social and economic policies to suit the needs of foreign investors and the dictates of the International Monetary Fund, is so wonderful for Africans, then why does Nelson Mandela call it "not acceptable"? Why did the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions term it "an attempt to undermine the development of our economies" by introducing "conditionalities that will only further weaken our economies and destroy the nascent industrial base that has been created"? Why does Randall Robinson of TransAfrica complain that it "contains numerous provisions mainly aimed at benefiting large foreign private investors and multinational corporations at the expense of true and equitable African development"? Why, moreover, is the bill opposed by virtually the entire African labor movement? Are all these people full of the same "phony baloney"?

To Friedman, such principled opposition is unfathomable. He attributes UNITE's position to "sheer knee-jerk protectionism," even though, as he himself points out, "the bill has tough measures to protect against any surge in imports from Africa." Readers of his column would hardly be aware that the union is supporting an alternative act, introduced by Jesse Jackson Jr. and endorsed by seventy-four (mostly progressive) representatives, forty-three HIV/AIDS organizations, sixty-six African nongovernmental organizations. The HOPE for Africa Act adopts what its supporters call a "holistic" approach to encouraging trade that includes aid, debt relief and AIDS prevention and treatment. Friedman told me he does not consider its free-trade provisions to be sufficiently attractive to global capital to create genuinely productive industries in the sub-Sahara, but Ebrahim Patel, general secretary of the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union, disagrees. After being quoted by Friedman in support of the principles of free trade for Africa (and with no complaints about the accuracy of his words), he co-signed a letter to the *Times* with UNITE's president that condemned the Growth and Opportunity Act's failure to "promote labor rights in Africa, in an effective manner, with trade union involvement in monitoring and verification," and its "harsh requirements that would force African countries to privatize government services, cut corporate taxes and other measures that, while welcomed by corporations, would not support development in Africa."

"Shame on the people blocking this bill. Shame on them," Friedman writes, as if parodying an old Rosenthal anti-Arab rant. But to cry "shame" from your perch on the *Times* Op-Ed page at your political and intellectual opponents—even opponents like Nelson Mandela—is both cheap and easy. To convince people to see the world your way, however, you must first demonstrate respect for their honor and intelligence, and engage the substance of their arguments. Friedman seems unwilling to do this, which, if not exactly shameful, is at least a damn shame. ■

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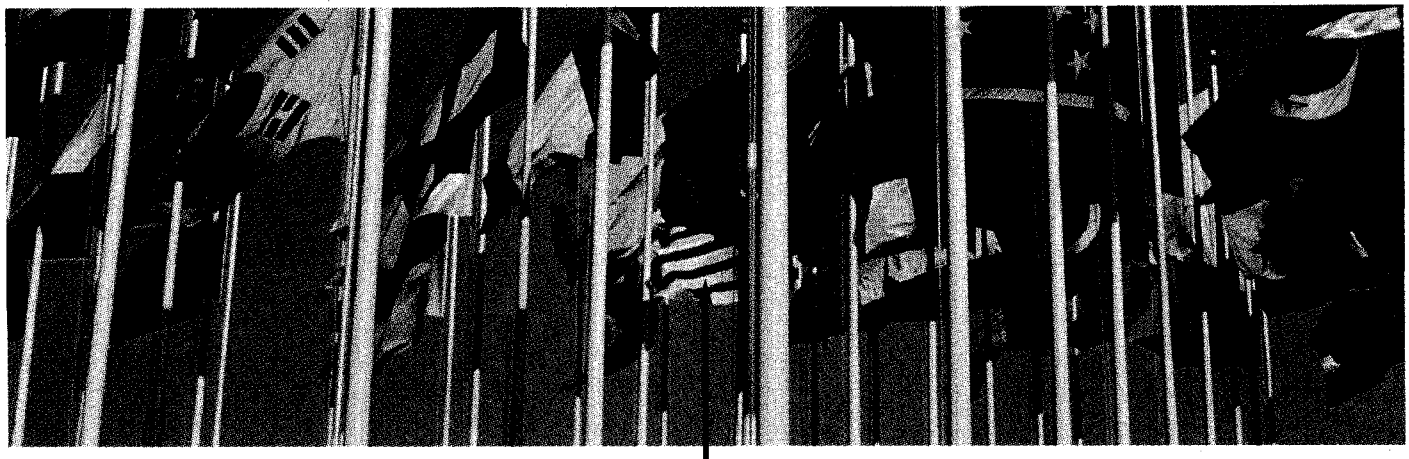
ARTICLES

A FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE COMMON CITIZEN



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by KAI BIRD

A quarter-century after the end of the Vietnam War, and eleven years after the collapse of the Berlin wall, it has become commonplace to say that we Americans have no consensus on foreign policy. Across the political spectrum, left or right, most Americans still cling to whatever assumptions they held during our long journey through the cold war. Having inhaled the sweet narcotic of a false triumphalism, Washington's foreign-policy elite talk as if America's "soft power" can prevail in nearly every instance. And where it cannot—as in Colombia's narco-civil war or against the specter of "international terrorism" in Afghanistan or Sudan—Republicans and Democrats alike sanction cruise-missile diplomacy or outright military interventionism reminiscent of Vietnam. Naturally, such behavior reinforces the anti-interventionist instincts of citizens on the liberal-left. But here—as in many aspects of foreign policy—I believe the American left has failed, perhaps understandably, to face up to a new set of post–cold war imponderables. It has also failed to take advantage of this post–cold war period to put forth truly fresh ideas on matters ranging from nuclear weapons to the environment.

It is one thing to be against unilateralism and against non-humanitarian interventionism—but it is quite another thing to be against humanitarian interventionism. To put it bluntly, the lessons we learned from Washington's bloody-minded intervention in Vietnam have little relevance in dealing with ethnic cleansing or oppression in Bosnia, Haiti, Rwanda, East Timor and Kosovo. And though the victims of these internal wars cry out for our help—and the aggressors are invariably thuggish regimes—the American left remains divided on how to respond.

This is understandable precisely because the duration and intensity of the cold war make it difficult to remember what might have been. Sadly, in our determination to oppose nuclear brinkmanship and other idiocies that marked Washington's foreign policy for forty-four years (1945–89), we have forgotten our basic radical principles and the common-sensical path not taken at the end of World War II. Most Americans have no memory of the designs Franklin Roosevelt's New Dealers had for postwar American foreign policy. Human rights, self-determination and an end to European colonization in the developing world, nuclear disarmament, international law, the World Court, the United Nations—these were all ideas of the progressive left. Even the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were initially conceived as vehicles for internationalizing the New Deal.

And then in the spring of 1945, Harry Truman became the accidental President. A narrow-minded man—a product of the Pendergast machine in Kansas City—Truman purged Washington of New Deal visionaries. An insecure liberal, Truman felt compelled to protect his right flank by authorizing internal security review boards. The subsequent witch hunt that we call McCarthyism was very much a bipartisan affair, designed to suppress dissent against the growing consensus of cold war liberalism. We can blame Truman and his supporters in the foreign-policy establishment for a host of missed opportunities during

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the cold war. They slammed the door on nuclear disarmament by deciding to make nuclear weapons the centerpiece of the nation's defense. They militarized the cold war by deciding to divide Germany and rearm West Germany within a NATO alliance, a policy that prolonged the cold war at great cost to life and treasure. By closing the door to trade and engagement, by hardening the lines of cold war confrontation, they postponed for years the very real potential for liberalization within the Soviet Union after Stalin.

Elsewhere, Truman reversed Roosevelt's support for decolonization of French, British and other European outposts in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Instead, Washington spent billions of dollars propping up any regime of corrupt mandarins willing to mouth the slogans of anti-Communism. In short, the cold war legacy begun by Truman was a democratic disaster. Nor were these policies inevitable. There was a choice. In 1945, at the beginning of the cold war, our leaders led us astray. We need to think of the cold war as an aberration, a wrong turn. As such, we need to go back to where we were in 1945—before we took the road to a permanent war economy, a national security state and a foreign policy based on unilateralism and cowboy triumphalism.

This collection of essays underscores that we on the left, for all our differences, share common instincts. All of us are profoundly suspicious, as Bruce Cumings puts it in his sweeping essay on the America Ascendancy, of what he calls "the celebration of a 'globalization' that is uncomfortably close to Americanization." As Robert Borosage argues, our foreign-policy budget priorities are irrational. We should be spending far, far less on defense against nonexistent enemies and investing far, far more on economic development abroad—as well as at home.

We desperately need to engage with the world—and not just dominate it with our marketplace. The problem, as Sherle Schwenninger, writes, is that the United States is both a revolutionary force in global culture and a status quo power: "A revolution as sweeping as globalization simultaneously creates the need for a new order." Some kind of global governance is necessary—but to be effective and to command any legitimacy it will require "international bodies that pool state sovereignty." As Jonathan Schell has earlier argued in these pages, the United States needs to revisit its first comprehensive approach to nuclear weapons—their abolition, as proposed in 1946 by the Acheson-Lilienthal Plan. That plan—drafted by J. Robert Oppenheimer—was derailed by Soviet-American tensions that would shortly fracture the World War II alliance and bring on the cold war. "The end of the cold war," Schell says, "has presented the most promising opportunity of the entire nuclear age to deliver the world from nuclear danger. The alternative, heralded by the new nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan (the first nuclear arms race having no relationship to the cold war) and the stalemate of traditional arms control, is unlimited, uncontrolled proliferation leading toward what some have called 'nuclear anarchy'—a state of affairs incompatible with any tolerable vision of the world's future."

Similarly, the World Bank and the IMF should not be abetting those governments that spend scarce resources on buying weapons instead of educating their children. We need an authentic UN, a viable International Criminal Court and a standing UN army to enforce recognized international law. And all this means lending pieces of our sovereignty to the global community. We need to work cooperatively with all countries, rather than see them as, at best, temporary allies.

As William Greider writes in his essay, "The choice is not between global engagement defined by the multinationals and right-wing, pull-up-the-drawbridges nationalism. The historic opening—ironically, advanced by the globalizing marketplace itself—is to envision a world without empires of any kind." Mark Hertsgaard argues that we should use our vast power in the international marketplace to penalize those who pollute the environment. And Kumi Naidoo suggests that much of this agenda can be pushed by using our resources under international law to encourage civil society.

In all these issues of global governance, America needs to share its power. On this much we agree. Many of us will remain in disagreement, however, on the divisive question of humanitarian interventionism. This hot-button issue is discussed in a round-table debate by Holly Burkhalter, Mahmood Mamdani, Ronald Steel, Mary Kaldor and David Rieff. Even here, there is more common ground than one might think.

Most of us will agree with Burkhalter's instinct that the prevention and suppression of genocide is a vital interest. In principle, this means we need to aid fellow democrats, particularly those democrats defending a secular, multicultural society from the attacks of ethnic cleansers. In some instances—as in Rwanda's horrifying genocide or Serbia's meticulously planned campaign of ethnic cleansing—this may mean, as Rieff maintains, going to war. But in most cases, I think Kaldor is right to suggest that "humanitarian intervention is much more like policing than warfighting." And in any case, many of us will agree with Steel's and Mamdani's reservations. Foreign intervention may be necessary when a whole nation or tribe is targeted for genocidal extermination. But as Steel puts it, "A humanitarian impulse could, through abuse, become a geopolitical nightmare."

The world is a complicated place, and, as Rieff argues, we can't take the politics out of foreign-policy-making. There are difficult political choices to be made in pursuing a foreign policy based on human rights. Nevertheless, the painful human costs associated with the rush to globalization—as well as the costs associated with ethnic conflict and environmental pollution—can be salved by the messy, even cumbersome, judicial tools of a democratic civil society. Whatever the cultural context, civil society is defined by certain universal principles common to every human community. So maybe, after all, we do have some consensus. Certain truths are indeed self-evident: Ultimately, our foreign policy should be wedded to a radical defense of *all* human rights. Such a policy was broadly defined by Franklin Roosevelt when he talked about an attainable world in which there would be not only freedom of speech and worship but also freedom from want and fear. We are at a crossroads—much like the crossroads Roosevelt faced in 1945. Our nation's wealth and power are such that Americans can't escape responsibility for good or ill in this new century. We should be making bold, openhearted choices now, in the light of day—lest we be forced to choose a path in the dark crisis of some new and different cold war. ■

Kai Bird, a Nation *contributing editor, is the author of* The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy & William Bundy, Brothers in Arms *(Touchstone) and co-editor with Lawrence Lifschultz of* Hiroshima's Shadow: Writings on the Denial of History and the Smithsonian Controversy *(Pamphleteers).*

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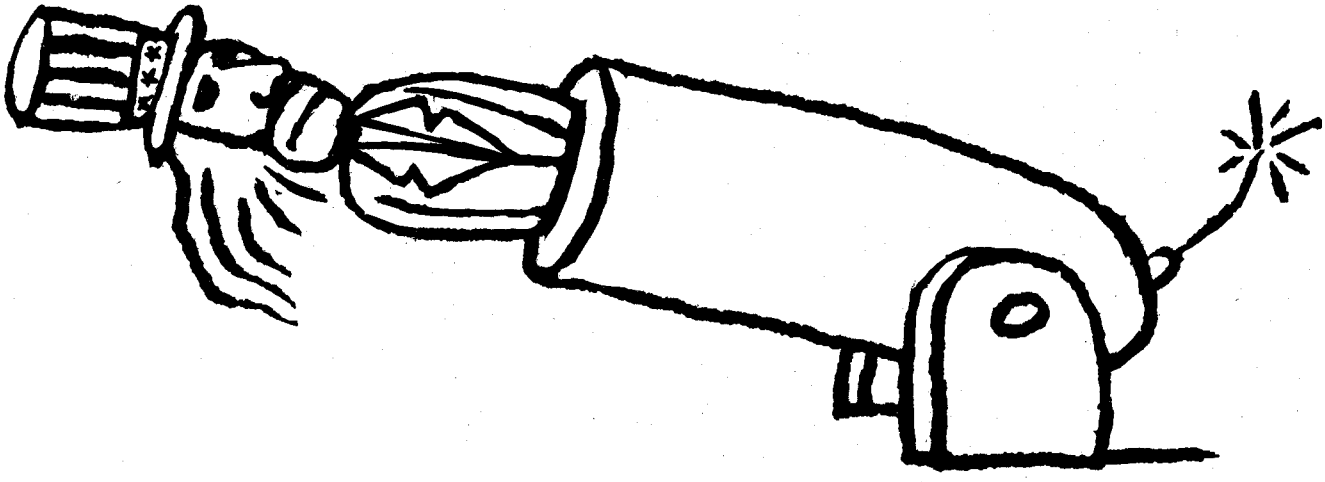

SCOTT MENCHIN

The American Ascendancy: Imposing a New World Order

BRUCE CUMINGS

The turn of the millennium provided yet another occasion to celebrate a triumphant American Century. And given the unipolar pre-eminence and comprehensive economic advantage that the United States enjoys today, only a spoilsport can complain. Unemployment and inflation are both at thirty-year lows. The stock market remains strong, though volatile, and the monster federal budget deficit of a decade ago miraculously metamorphoses into a surplus that may soon reach more than $1 trillion. Meanwhile, President William Jefferson Clinton, not long after a humiliating impeachment, was rated in 1999 as the best of all postwar Presidents in conducting foreign policy (a dizzying ascent from eighth place in 1994), according to a nationwide poll by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. This surprising result might also, of course, bespeak inattention: When asked to name the two or three most important foreign policy issues facing the United States, fully 21 percent of the public couldn't think of one (they answered "don't know"), and a mere 7 percent thought foreign policy issues were important to the nation. But who cares, when all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds?

If this intoxicating optimism is commonplace today, it would have seemed demented just a few short years ago: Back then, the scholars and popular pundits who are supposed to know the occult science of international affairs were full of dread about American decline and Japanese and German advance. The American Century looked like an unaccountably short one. Today it is disconcerting to recall the towering influence of work by "declinists" like Paul Kennedy (*The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*) and Clyde Prestowitz (*Trading Places*); it is positively embarrassing to read recent accounts like Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of the World Order* and Donald White's *The American Century*, which still seem to assume an America on the road to ruin. Prestowitz thought Japan was ahead of the United States in nearly every important industry and argued that Japan was verging on hegemonic predominance in the world economy. Now it is difficult to find any American who takes Japan seriously—in 1990, 63 percent of foreign policy elites fretted about competition from Japan; that fell to 21 percent in 1994 and a mere 14 percent in 1998.

Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* had a different point to make: The end of the cold war marked the real millennial transition, leaving just one system standing—ours. Few could have imagined Fukuyama doing this through a reprise of the thought of Hegel—and perhaps least of all the great philosopher himself, who would roll over in his grave to see his dialectic grinding to a halt in the Valhalla of George Bush and Bill Clinton's philistine United States. But Fukuyama's argument had an unquestionable ingenuity, taking the thinker perhaps most alien to the pragmatic and unphilosophical American soul, Hegel, and using his thought to proclaim something quintessentially American: that the pot of gold at the end of History's rainbow is free-market liberalism. History just happened to culminate in the reigning orthodoxy of our era, the neoliberalism of Thatcher and Reagan.

The United States has such a comprehensive advantage in the world that it could occupy itself for a full year with the Monica Lewinsky scandal, a year punctuated by the disastrous collapse of several of the world's important economies (South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Russia) and followed by a new war, and nothing happened except that the American economic lead lengthened. The stock market continued to go up in spite of the global finan-

Bruce Cumings teaches at the University of Chicago and is working on a book called The American Ascendancy, *forthcoming from Yale.*

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cial crisis, which included a very expensive implosion of the Russian economy in August 1998; the market expanded all through the war in Kosovo. (More recently it appeared that the bull market might be coming to an end.) Economic growth in the last quarters of both 1998 and 1999 was so robust (6.1 and 6.9 percent, respectively) that in GNP terms it created a Spain overnight. This isn't to say that US diplomacy is winning friends and influencing people the world over, but so what? Former UN chief Boutros Boutros-Ghali put his finger on the deepest truth: "Like in Roman times," he said, the Americans "have no diplomacy; you don't need diplomacy if you are so powerful."

Let me try to isolate four elements that I think account for the American ascendancy today, each of which has little to do with preponderant military strength (even though the United States has that, too): mass consumption and mass culture, the advantages of a continent, an unappreciated aspect of American technological prowess and the longevity of the global system that American planners established after World War II, a system that was long obscured by cold war obsessions.

I Shop, Therefore I Am

A curious incongruity in our halcyon era is the American savings rate: It hit exactly zero a year ago, in early 1999, as consumption outran savings for the first time, and continued going south. Meanwhile, in Japan the savings rate remains high, as always, but bank interest rates are just above zero for preferred customers, and last March the government handed out free coupons worth about $160 each in hopes that consumers would go out and spend them. If the Japanese couldn't sell in the vast American market (like just about every other exporter), their economy would expire. What gives? Basically the Japanese do not get it: Capitalism is about spending, not about saving—and the United States pioneered incomparable ways to spend money, not yesterday but eighty years ago. The "Roaring Twenties" were not just an era of flappers and the Charleston, but years of pioneering innovation when Americans first sampled the seductive possibilities of mass consumption and mass culture that the rest of the world now absorbs as part of its own lifestyle: automobiles, radios, Hollywood films, professional sports and "consumer durables" like refrigerators. At that time American industry perfected both mass production and the means to digest the same goods—en masse.

That decade capped an amazingly quick American rise to world power: The United States had 29 percent of global industrial production in the 1880s, 36 percent by 1913 (compared with Britain's 14 percent) and 42 percent in 1929—the highest percentage ever, save for the abnormal period just after World War II when all the advanced industrial economies had suffered extensive war damage, except for the unscathed United States—which temporarily held half of all global production. This period witnessed the fruition of assembly-line mass production, as is well known, with Henry Ford's Model T, demonstrating the capacity to turn out automobiles like cookies, and his high, $5-a-day wage, which enabled Ford's workers to purchase them. Less appreciated was the pioneering combination of salesmanship, mass advertising and easy credit that General Motors used to compete with Ford and to saturate the American market with automobiles (from 1920 to 1929 the per capita auto-ownership rate went from 1 in 13 people to 1 in 5, a level not reached by other industrial countries until the sixties).

In the same decade a Russian immigrant named David Sarnoff, a self-taught engineer working in wireless communications for the Navy, had the vision of a radio in every home. In the twenties RCA emerged under his leadership, and American firms paid for the free radio programs by advertising their wares—in every home. Seventy years later another government invention, called the Internet, also plastered with advertising, would invade the household. Historian Olivier Zunz, whose book *Why the American Century?* is a useful contribution amid the current hailstorm of self-congratulation, reminds us that as early as 1914 Walter Lippmann linked democracy to "the right to purchase consumers' goods at low prices"; Zunz highlights a pragmatic American coalition of business, science and government yielding a huge variety of applied technology oriented toward mass consumption and commercialism, in the twenties and after—"an array of original achievements in science and industry" that led to "a concurrent and deliberate reorganization of society."

A Great Leap Forward?

It was Austrian thinker Joseph Schumpeter who best understood the extraordinary growth spurt of the twenties. Schumpeter was, among other things, a theorist of business cycles of all kinds who understood this new burst of wealth to be a combination of new technologies (the assembly line), cheap credit (like GMAC) and cheap energy (petroleum, gushing into the market as American firms developed California and Texas wells) combining to produce a "leading sector" or flagship industry: automobiles. He focused on structural changes in the economy, qualitative changes that conventional economists—with their emphasis on incremental quantitative change and equilibrium models—have trouble explaining.

Now think about our era: For the past several years economists, not least among them Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, have been trying to figure out how the American economy can grow so fast with effective full employment, and yet not create inflation. The conventional explanation would look for gains in labor productivity, but (at least until recently) the data did not show gains sufficient to account for this phenomenon. Chairman Greenspan has frequently speculated, therefore, that something new must be happening—perhaps the efficiencies of the information age could not be captured by conventional data-gathering, or they would show up in the future. Lo and behold, productivity gains began climbing again in 1996; productivity rose 2.8 percent in 1998, then leaped forward 5.4 percent in the last half of 1999.

Were Schumpeter alive, he would say that we have a new leading-sector technology (the microchip), cheap energy (gasoline costs about the same today as it did in the fifties) and a unique combination of the two in that the silicon chip requires raw-material inputs that are no more than 3 percent of its cost (compared with 40 percent for automobiles), and the energy to run them is so minuscule that computers can be turned on all the time; that the information courses through fiber-optic cables, which can transmit many times the number of messages of copper telephone wire yet require 5 percent of the energy to produce as compared with copper; and finally that credit and wealth

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creation has been so dizzying (American credit drove the domestic and world economy in the nineties, with Internet stock offerings jumping 500 percent in one day) that entire cities seem to be transformed almost overnight—like San Jose, for example, now undergoing a growth spurt worthy of Los Angeles in the twenties and one of the larger exporting cities in the United States.

America's contemporary prowess, of course, is sticking badly in the craw of any number of Europeans these days, as editorials like this one from London's centrist *Independent* illustrate:

> the dumb certitude; the contempt for the poor; the facile amiability; the ostentatious religiosity; the callous laws; the love of guns; the Hollywood sensibility; the all-consuming fetish for material success; the showy insubstantiality of its politics; the celebrity junk; the infantile literal-mindedness; and the faith, withal, in America's planetary moral superiority.

I might be inclined to agree with this critique—I certainly recognize my fellow Americans in it—but so what? The historian in me would point out that the same thing could have been said (and was more than once) by Sinclair Lewis and other writers—back in the Roaring Twenties.

The Sign of a Good Brand

If we retrieve the February 17, 1941, issue of *Life*, which carried Henry Luce's original essay, "The American Century," we find him saying that the consumptive paradise that had arisen in the twenties ("the abundant life," as Luce called it), should be available "for all mankind" once they wake up to "America's vision." This program, of course, should not march forward just with an overflow of consumer durables, but under the banner of American idealism: "It must be a sharing with all peoples of our Bill of Rights, our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, our magnificent industrial products, our technical skills. It must be an internationalism of the people, by the people and for the people." Luce held out to underdeveloped peoples the chance to escape their problems by becoming American—an absurd proposition in 1941. But he put his finger on a truth—one that keeps people from all corners of the world immigrating to this country. Jean Baudrillard once wrote that the American flag itself was the "trademark of a good brand"; Henry Luce knew that in 1941.

Even in remote Tibet people seek consumer (or couch-potato) heaven: Take "Darchi," a middle-aged peasant who, as he harvested barley near his mud-brick village, told an American reporter that he didn't really care about independence from China: "I want to buy a television, and then I can sit back and drink barley beer and watch TV." Or as Luce put it, "Once we cease to distract ourselves with lifeless arguments about isolationism, we shall be amazed to discover that there is already an immense American internationalism. American jazz, Hollywood movies, American slang, American machines and patented products are in fact the only things that every community in the world, from Zanzibar to Hamburg, recognizes in common." Baudrillard was closer to the truth when he wrote, "Whatever happens, and whatever one thinks of the arrogance of the dollar or the multinationals, it is this culture which, the world over, fascinates those very people who suffer most at its hands, and it does so through the deep, insane conviction that it has made all their dreams come true." If Henry Luce both understood and epitomized this "insane conviction," the world's peoples did not provide much evidence of a thirst for the American way in 1941 or, for that matter, during thirty years of anti-imperial wars after World War II. But they do today, from China to South Africa to Russia.

'Massive Fog Grips Europe; Continent Isolated'

So read a London newspaper headline during the heyday of the empire on which the sun never set. England and Japan both occupy small islands, set just far enough away from the mainland to breed a solipsistic sense of ineffable superiority. But the American position in the world owes much to being the first hegemonic power to inhabit an immense land mass: a continent open at both ends to vast potential markets. The United States is the only industrial country with long Atlantic and Pacific coasts, making it simultaneously an Atlantic and a Pacific power; the historic dominance of Atlanticists (Henry Kissinger and Samuel Huntington are contemporary examples), gazing upon a Europe whose civilization gave birth to our own, averts our eyes from this fact. Indeed, the Continental Divide still makes a New Yorker uncomfortable in Los Angeles (and vice versa).

Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal signaled the direct involvement of the federal government in the industrial development of the far West. The New Deal was instrumental in building massive infrastructures (like the Grand Coulee Dam), in the management of Western lands and the immense water works necessary to till them (through the Soil Conservation Service and other means), and, under federal auspices and emergency conditions, in subsidizing heavy industries connected to the war effort. Southern California's rapidly emerging aircraft business was completely dependent on government contracts; military industries ran three shifts during the war, with airplanes accounting for 34 percent of all production; the population of Los Angeles increased by a third from 1940 to 1950. Washington also subsidized all kinds of social overhead in the area: the railroads, the highways, the airlines and the water needed for a vast commercialization and suburbanization.

If Los Angeles symbolized the prowess of America's West Coast at midcentury, at the end of it the symbolic city is Seattle. I lived in Seattle for ten years, beginning in 1977. Coming from New York, it struck me as an isolated and insulated backwater: an Omaha that happened to be situated on the Pacific Coast. The city fathers seemed unaware of the opportunities beckoning from across the great ocean. The city was just then emerging from the "Boeing bust" of the early seventies, when severe job cuts caused an even more severe recession; the joke was to ask the last person leaving Seattle to turn out the lights.

A decade later Microsoft had replaced Boeing as the flagship industry of Seattle, a world-class monopoly every bit as important to the American position in the world as John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil a century earlier. City fathers funded an enormous new port sprouting hundreds of container-ship cranes, helping to make of Seattle a major American exporting city, and nearly foamed at the mouth to deepen the burgeoning Pacific Rim trade. The state's Congressional delegation had become the leading pillar of free-trade legislation. Boeing had long backlogs of 747s on order—from China.

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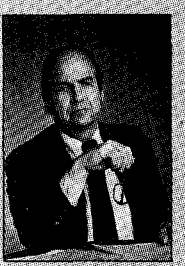

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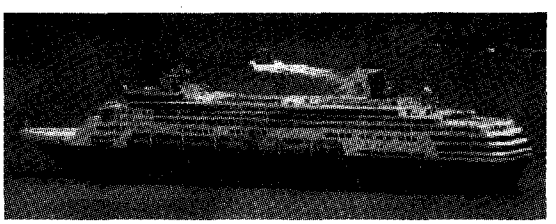

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In other words, the advantage of a continental economy is that things can be falling apart in one region (the Rustbelt in the 1980s) and coming together in another (America's Pacific Rim). Today Los Angeles and Seattle are enormously dynamic, polyglot Pacific Rim cities of extraordinary multiethnic and multicultural diversity, wired-up centers of the revolution in communications, entertainment and Internet commerce.

Hegemony Means Never Having to Say You're Sorry

What is hegemony? After a recent lecture a student asked me why it was so difficult in this country to have a reasoned discussion about this phenomenon; the minute you use the word, someone accuses you of being a Marxist. Recently postmodern scholar Judith Butler tried to unpack her views in a *New York Times* editorial: Hegemony, she explained, is when something is so powerful that you have no conscious awareness of it. There is a potent surreptitious mastery that comes from that which cannot be named. By refusing the name "hegemony," we also refuse a debate about what it is and what it means for the American people. The result, in my opinion, is that hegemony is least understood at its own point of origin—the United States.

Dean Acheson was present at the creation of this hegemony, as the United States grasped for world leadership amid the regression of the British Empire; as he put it, America was for the first time in the position of a person who, "on the death of a parent, hears in a new way the roaring of the cataract." Acheson's problem was to be pregnant with an idea that he could not articulate, lest Harry Truman lose the next election (for example, by announcing that the United States had now replaced England as the power with all the burdens-of-last-resort in the world system). To put it differently, the internationalist forces in American politics lacked a strong domestic base, particularly in Congress, which held many former isolationists (not to mention lunatics like Joe McCarthy, who astonished Wall Street by calling Acheson a Communist). George Kennan provided the solution to this dilemma with an elegant metaphor: containment. Imagine, a doctrine defining hegemony by what it opposes, obviating the necessity to explain to the American people what it is and what its consequences will be for them. It is only today, after the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, that Americans can see this obscured, underlying system that keeps going in spite of the disappearance of its ostensible raison d'être—the Communist bloc.

A central aspect of the containment project was to revive the industrial production of just-defeated Germany and Japan, to knit together a productive coalition that would revive both countries, keep Communism at bay, get them off the American dole, rejuvenate the middle classes and thereby extend American-style mass consumption to our allies. Japan and West Germany were posted as industrial workshops; cheap energy from the Middle East fueled their recovery and also created markets for American goods. Germans drove off in their Volkswagens, Italians in their Fiats, Frenchmen in their Renaults and Japanese in their Toyotas—into a consumer paradise that recapitulated America's leap forward in the twenties.

This "liberal" order encompassed a vast global militarization, eventually encompassing millions of American troops stationed at hundreds of bases in thirty-five countries, a blue ocean Navy and an Air Force that was for decades the key carrier of nuclear weapons, a phenomenon often treated as an unfortunate result of the bipolar confrontation with Moscow. This archipelago of empire easily survived the end of the cold war. Today it still holds the post–World War II settlement in place, and denies us the opportunity to see if the pacifist norms inculcated in Japan, or the liberal norms of Germany, will survive the removal of US troops and a return to full security autonomy. More important, by basing troops in the territories of the second- and third-largest economies in the world half a century after the last global war ended, the United States has a breadth of comprehensive advantage that neither the Dutch nor the British empire ever imagined. In this sense, the global reach and power of the contemporary American realm can only be compared to the Roman Empire.

In sum, this form of hegemony is potent, and it has a message: the capitalist market, the open door, pluralist democracy and self-determination. If this last element was often honored in the breach by Washington, it nonetheless has been a potent political and cultural ideal in the American arsenal since Woodrow Wilson first articulated his famous "Fourteen Points." Today this heterogeneous mix of Wilson and Nixon, Roosevelt and Reagan, Bill Clinton and Jesse Helms, seems to have no rival on the horizon that could possibly hope to take its measure.

The Techno-World and Globalization

For the past few years "globalization" has been the mantra of Wall Street, idyllic snowy gatherings in Davos and, of course, the Clinton Administration. But this term hides as much as it illuminates; it is often a euphemism for Americanization, just as the "multinational" corporation began as, and often remains today, an American or Japanese or German corporation operating in other countries. The endless, unseemly touting of globalization muffles attention to new circuits of power in the same old places, ones that have grown apace with the upheavals of the microchip. Why upheavals? Because one settled industry after another has been undone by Information Age technology. This is most obvious in the quick obsolescence of the hugely expensive trunk lines, switching stations and home telephone trappings of the big telephone companies. Fiber optics allows many times more messages than old copper wires, as we have seen; digital switches are so capacious that a single smaller country can be handled with one switch; cellular circuits boom throughout the world and enable a country like China to leapfrog over the cost of putting a wired telephone in every home. The massive deregulation of recent years is both a consequence and a cause of these upheavals, but it has been a key element in freeing up the new technologies.

The new information technologies make feasible enormous new networks of power, centralizing control and management in several urban nodes (New York, Los Angeles, London, Tokyo). A key reason for the renaissance of New York City as a financial and cultural capital in the nineties was its concentration of service industries (accounting, law, finance, advertising, stock markets); services are the largest sector in the American economy now. Susan Strange has shown that the top six accounting firms in the world are all Anglo-American; together they audit fully 494 of the Fortune 500 firms, yielding a combined income of

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$30 billion a year. Nine of the top fifteen public telephone operators are based in the United States, with five more in Europe and only one in Japan (state-owned Nippon Telephone and Telegraph). Thus North America and Europe accounted for 75 percent of all telecom revenues in 1993.

As Saskia Sassen of the University of Chicago has argued, this process does not weaken national governments and make of our era one in which transnational corporations rule, because only states can legislate the rules of globalization. This is evident in the coordination of the United States, Britain and the European Union in legislating the domain and the rules for new international zones like the European Union and NAFTA (united markets for transnational business), thus to support and propel globalization. American standards of all kinds are the new standards of globalization: Practices that are grouped under the august social fiction known as "the rule of law" are organizing the globe in their image, through the growth of transnational legal regimes based on Western practices of property rights, contracts and transparency—the highly developed legal framework for the conduct of world capitalism, and something on which every transnational corporation depends.

The champions of the Internet and cyberspace pride themselves on the democratic and egalitarian openness of their transparent electronic sphere. But power also abhors a vacuum. Corporations are hierarchical organizations in competitive environments that make transparency anathema; they are opaque, making secret and often unaccountable decisions, with phalanxes of highly paid lawyers to protect them; meanwhile, they demand transparency of everyone else in their environment—especially consumers (who can feel like they have visited a proctologist just by applying for a mortgage), but also entire nations subjected to the prying eyes of the IMF and the World Bank.

This same centralization of power estranges and isolates poorer regions of the world, which often lack even the most basic technology of our age, electricity. When President Clinton visited a remote village in Africa in 1998 and urged that the local school connect to the World Wide Web, he did not appear to notice that the school had no electricity. Using the Web I can find satellite photos of this village, learn the ethnicity of its inhabitants and count the number of homes with running water. But the villagers cannot see me or the World Bank employees who catalogue such information. And because knowledge is power, they are less free than before the advent of the computer. Instead of homogenizing these Africans, turning them into the Americans they no doubt would like to be (given the alternatives), "the technological annulment of temporal/spatial distances," in Zygmunt Bauman's words, tends to polarize us and them. A deepening spatial segregation between rich and poor, both within countries and in the world as a whole, defines our era, and enhances central power just as it peripheralizes those left behind, creating new polarizations of wealth and poverty that have only increased in the past two decades. One of the most striking elements in the recent economic boom in the United States is that household income has increased slowly and incrementally while wealth has grown geometrically (especially in stock holdings); household income was basically stagnant from 1975 to 1995, even if it has increased gradually in the past five years. Such a process, of course, yields a massive transfer of wealth from the poor

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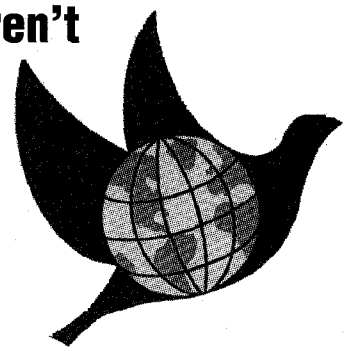

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and middle classes to the top decile of the population.

While some argue that such data prove that American economic decline continues, it is far better evidence of the power of the owners of capital and expertise. Corporations are mobile, while residential communities are not; professionals who are technically competent and well paid move faster than ever, and are festooned with portable devices to keep them in touch with some center (portable computers, cell phones, beepers and pagers), while those in nonprofessional jobs, rooted to a place, lose out. The growing service sector, now hitched to the microchip, also polarizes income between a handful of very high paying positions and a mass of low-paying and often part-time jobs.

This creates an enormous problem for the (Keynesian) demand-promotion so essential to maintaining American-style shop-till-you-drop consumption, because you can't maintain a Lucean middle-class lifestyle on stagnant wages. Much more important, however, is the pressure brought to bear by neoliberal efficiencies on existing social arrangements that were the ubiquitous products of the post–World War II settlements in all the industrial countries (the welfare state in the United States, the social market in Germany, the cradle-to-grave permanent employment and welfare of postwar Japan), and that put a floor under poverty and did so much to create huge middle classes. This pressure has now set off a major oppositional movement to neoliberalism and globalization in Western Europe—and in Seattle and DC—with intellectuals coming to see the US challenge as a civilizational confrontation, a matter of life and death: how to protect hard-fought gains for the working and middle classes against an untrammeled "ecumenical gospel" of neoliberalism pioneered by Thatcher and Reagan, but made into his own by the domestic and foreign economic policies of Bill Clinton.

As the world market approaches its full global reach, it is clear that 'globalization' is uncomfortably close to Americanization.

Since 1993 the "Clinton Doctrine" has been one of aggressive foreign economic policy designed to promote exports and to open targeted economies to American goods and investment, while maintaining the cold war positions that give Washington a diffuse leverage over its allies like Japan and Germany and that pose a subtle but distinct threat to potential adversaries like China. All this goes on under the neoliberal legitimation of Smithean free markets and Lockean democracy and civil society—that is, Luce's "American vision."

All the systemic alternatives to the One World of multinational capital have collapsed: above all, the Eastern bloc and the Soviet Union in 1989–91, but also the neomercantile model of East Asian development in Japan and Korea. The least noticed collapse of our time is that of the Third World, the site of revolutionary nationalism and anti-imperial wars for three decades after 1945, the self-constituted alternative to both blocs in the cold war that lasted from the 1955 Bandung Conference through the Non-Aligned Movement and into the late-seventies demands for a New International Economic Order. Twenty years later we have a collection of failed states running from Zambia to North Korea, an enormous if amorphous population of stateless people from Kosovo to Sudan and the recurrent television spectacle of millions of people starving to death, from Sudan again to North Korea. The Third World moves not up the developmental ladder, but from statehood to catastrophe. It is dominated by the advanced countries in a way unprecedented since the colonial era, and with most of it outside the loop of the prosperity of recent years, it is the prime source of war, instability and class conflict—but with no convincing antisystemic model to follow.

At the turn of the new century Americans revel in the robust middle age of US global leadership. Instead of a premature end to the American Century or a coming clash of civilizations, today there appears to be one dominant global civilization, the American, and several atavisms masquerading as civilizational challenges—Islamic fundamentalism, Balkan mayhem, the (not very) Confucian East, the obsolescing economic nationalism of Japan and South Korea, the declining Chinese Communist grip on a rapidly growing capitalist China and a Russia that does not appear to have an economy in 2000, let alone a competing civilization. This world, however advanced it may appear, is the anticipated consequence, the unfolding of the liberal hegemony that American internationalists like Acheson envisioned in the peculiarly American moment of 1945. Because of the Other—Soviet Communism, old-world imperialism, national liberation movements—the boundaries of the system were policed by naval task forces, the nuclear delivery capabilities of air forces and, above all, the archipelago of American military bases. But when the Other disappeared, the structure continued in place and, in the 1990s, achieved the full florescence that its planners had imagined in the 1940s. That is, the "New World Order" that George Bush and many others cast about for after 1989 was both the same old order and the ongoing fulfillment of postwar planning. A certain balance of power holds sway in Europe, where three advanced industrial nations of roughly the same size (England, France and Italy, all with GNPs of around $1.25 trillion) constrain the largest power, Germany (which is comparatively not much larger, at about $1.75 trillion GNP), and all are now enmeshed in the European Union. Japan is much larger (at around $3 trillion GNP) and might dominate Asia if it had the autonomy to do so, but with the United States still providing for its defense, it does not—and in 2000 it continues its decade-long struggle just to find a way to revive its flagging economy.

Now the world market approaches its full global reach, unfolding in a vacuum of alternatives amid the celebration of a "globalization" that is uncomfortably close to Americanization. But this may also foretell a new chapter in world history, as we learn, perhaps really for the first time, whether the self-regulating market can be the basis for global order—the recipe for a truly long peace, or for a truly unprecedented disaster. A breakdown of the world economy is the biggest systemic threat to world order in our time; it is the singular catastrophe that could revive all the apparently vanquished problems. The coming decades will thus provide a test of whether the continuously unfolding movement of American-inscribed world order has a proper claim to universality, or whether it remains merely the partial and limited worldview of its original author, the middle class, and therefore unavailing to the continuing plight of the majority of the world's peoples. ■

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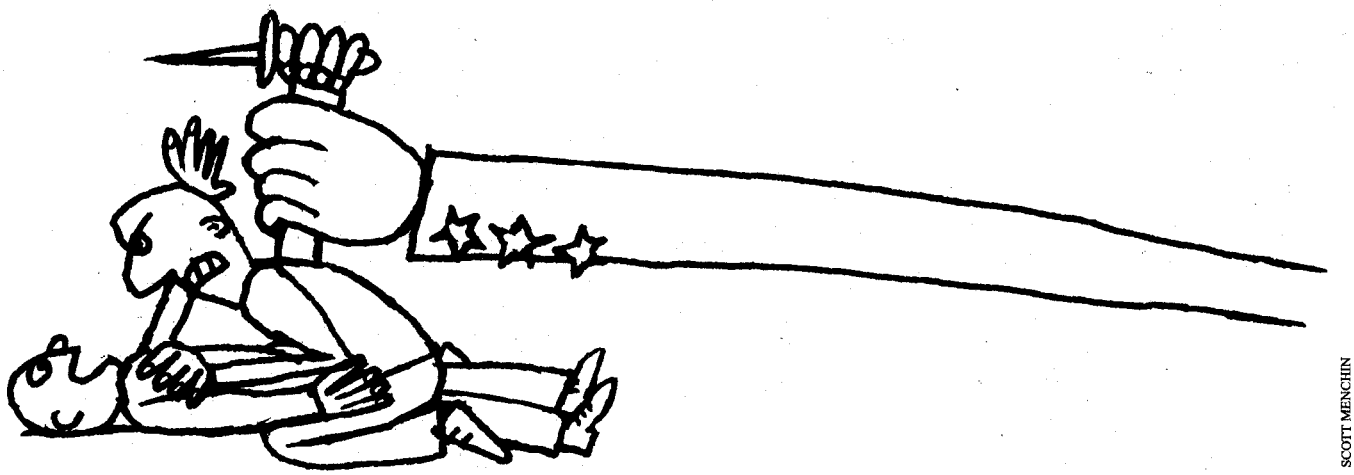
WITH THE END OF THE COLD WAR, INTERVENTION IS NO LONGER AUTOMATICALLY SUSPECT AS INTERFERENCE. BUT WHAT RULES SHOULD GUIDE THIS NEW USE OF POWER?



SCOTT MENCHIN

Humanitarian Intervention: A Forum

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Holly Burkhalter

Holly Burkhalter has more than twenty years' experience in the human rights field. She is currently advocacy director of Physicians for Human Rights and previously worked for Human Rights Watch.

The date was April 16, 1994, and the place was the Rwandan town of Cyahinda. Thirty-five hundred unarmed Tutsi men, women and children had packed into a small Catholic church, and 4,000 more crowded into surrounding church buildings to escape from the Rwandan army and its death squads. But the men came with their guns and machetes and clubs, surrounded the parish buildings and attacked the helpless families within. In a methodical and almost leisurely manner, they murdered their day's quota—thousands—then came back the next day, and the next.

At the end of four days, some 5,500 unarmed men and women, old people, toddlers and infants lay beneath the pews and aisles and heaped on the altar, their blood and brains splashed on the walls. The last to die at the church was a schoolgirl who had been thrown alive into a deep hole. Other children came to give her water to drink. When the local mayor learned of this, he ordered the hole covered.

There may be those who firmly believe that there should have been no military intervention to save the people in the church and stop the genocide, but I doubt that many of us would like to be counted among them. Whatever differences may roil us over questions of when, where and who on earth should intervene with military force to stop crimes against humanity and genocide, there are times when it simply must be done, and we know it.

Some people of conscience believe that because of the violence the United States has sponsored, our government has no business intervening to suppress vast crimes by others. I disagree. The Genocide Convention does not oblige only those treaty signatories with immaculate hands to prevent and punish the crime of genocide. Our solemn treaty commitment requires the United States to suppress genocide, even if shaming memories of the Holocaust, the Rwanda genocide and the disemboweling of Bosnia do not.

Yet when the case for military intervention to suppress genocide becomes as clear as that of Rwanda, it very late to be finding one's conviction. The Rwanda genocide could have been stopped, but it would have been far easier to prevent. The international community possessed the will to do neither. And so the situation remains to this day, notwithstanding UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's magnificent articulation of a new doctrine, wherein he placed suppression of crimes against humanity above a country's claims of sovereignty.

That doctrine, welcome as it is, will not save a single life if the great nations of the world do not empower the UN to prevent and punish genocide and crimes against humanity, or, if the international institution is incapable, do it themselves. We as citizens should demand that our President declare the principle that prevention and suppression of genocide and crimes against humanity, and punishment of those responsible, are of vital interest to the United States, and announce a program to make this pledge meaningful. First, the United States should contribute significant resources to help expand the UN's own capacity to prevent or suppress genocide and crimes against humanity. The creation of a standing UN rapid-response force is what is most needed to respond quickly to incipient genocide. Since that is not likely to happen with the current US Congress, however, we should demand, at a minimum, that Congress support standby arrangements where troop-contributing nations can designate, train and equip ready units for emergency intervention. Moreover, funds

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should be provided to double or triple the Secretary General's $50 million reserve fund for preventive action.

Additionally, Congress should appropriate funding to establish an enhanced UN peacekeeping command center in New York and mobile command centers elsewhere to service a rapid deployment to suppress genocide or crimes against humanity. And, so that no world leader can claim, as Clinton did of Rwanda, "I didn't know," the Security Council should demand regular briefings by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and High Commissioner for Refugees when vast crimes unfold. There are other steps that the United States can take to prevent or deter such events. Our own intelligence and diplomatic services should be assigned and funded to collect documentation (including radio and telephone intercepts and satellite photography) in countries where there are early-warning indicators of mass killings to come. Remember Rwanda? Watch for the stigmatization, discrimination and targeted killings of ethnic minorities, a spike in weapons imports, the spawning of heavily armed militias and the broadcasting of chauvinistic and hate-filled political speeches. These genocidal indicators should be widely publicized and used in support of a concerted diplomatic initiative to pressure governments in those countries.

Additionally, perpetrators should be denounced by name, their visas scrapped and their overseas assets seized. Foreign aid of all types except humanitarian should be suspended and hate radio jammed. Extensive human rights monitoring by official bodies such as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or ad hoc diplomatic arrangements such as the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission, should be initiated and funded.

Even if our President and Congress were to pursue policies to prevent genocide and crimes against humanity with a seriousness of purpose born of the certainty that failure to do so would require American support for military intervention, preventive measures would sometimes fail. When that happens, we should demand that our government strongly support UN peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations, politically, materially, militarily, financially and logistically.

Yet what of those occasions when intervention is clearly required to save helpless people from mass butchery, but one or another member of the Security Council says no? During the Rwanda genocide, it was, to our shame, our own government that thwarted the UN. During the Kosovo crisis it was Russia, and others will take their turn elsewhere. Are the victims less deserving because Russia or China or the United States itself has decided that they are not worth saving?

Imagine, if you will, that a government, let's say Canada, acting under the auspices of the Genocide Convention's command that genocide must be stopped and its perpetrators punished, had bucked the will of a US-dominated Security Council in April of 1994 and sent troops unilaterally to Rwanda. Imagine those Canadian soldiers surrounding the church and parish buildings in Cyahinda and a hundred places like it, defeating the machete-wielding butchers whose only prowess was in slashing children, and leading those thousands of families to safety. Condemn such an operation as illegal and immoral because it did not bear the Security Council's imprimatur? Not on your life. And not on theirs.

★

Mahmood Mamdani

Mahmood Mamdani, a Ugandan citizen, is Herbert Lehman Professor of Government and director of the Institute of African Studies at Columbia University. He received his doctorate from Harvard and has previously taught at several African universities. He is currently completing a political analysis of the causes and consequences of the genocide in Rwanda.

Advocates of "humanitarian intervention" argue that Rwanda needs to be a turning point in post–cold war politics, one that will introduce a renewed consensus on human rights into international politics. If the pledge that followed the Holocaust—"never again"—could not be upheld because of the cold war, they argue, the end of the cold war provides the context necessary to renew that pledge and give it teeth.

The consensus around "humanitarian intervention" brings together two different points of view. For some, the end of the cold war provides a real opportunity for observing a human rights standard internationally. Now that dictators hitherto nurtured by the cold war—Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic, for example—have been orphaned by its end, they must be forced to observe minimal international human rights standards. Should they fail to observe these standards, they must be the target of armed humanitarian intervention.

For others, the end of the cold war entails the danger that big powers may succumb to isolationism, and underlines the need to hold those powers responsible for international policing. From this point of view, the need for humanitarian intervention arises precisely in those cases where powerful nations do not have direct interests at stake and are thus unwilling to risk anything. In those instances, say human rights activists, it is vital to compel big-power intervention for humanitarian purposes. In other words, if intervention is not a political necessity, it must be made one through a popular crusade that demands it.

I disagree with those who call for "humanitarian interventions" in the post–cold war era for one reason: I think it necessary to judge each intervention on its own merit, particularly its political merit. In a globalized world of highly unequal actors, humanitarian intervention will be a name for big-power intervention in practice. Every intervention will serve a complex of interests, general and specific. There can be no such thing as an unambiguous humanitarian intervention.

Like every turning point, Rwanda offers us not one but several lessons. The UN did not just withdraw; it also authorized a humanitarian intervention by the French, code-named Operation Turquoise. That intervention did save many Tutsi, but it also saved the political and military leadership that carried out the genocide. As if to underline that "humanitarian intervention" is indeed a political blank check, neither the UN nor any other international forum has held the French accountable for that intervention.

Rather than being an exception, doesn't Operation Turquoise fit neatly into a history of imperial intervention over the past several centuries? Didn't slaving powers portray Africa as a state of nature where life was nasty, brutish and short and where slavery salvaged the lives of its victims, introducing them to the nobility of labor? And didn't colonial powers entering Africa toward the

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end of the nineteenth century claim to be stamping out slavery? In other words, hasn't every imperial intervention claimed to be humanitarian?

In addition to the French intervention in Rwanda, the US-led interventions in Iraq and Kosovo also teach us that every intervention has its politics. Iraq brought home the fact that the lives of ordinary Iraqis were dispensable, whether they turned the intervention into an opportunity to remove the dictatorship through popular action or whether the dictatorship turned them into human shields against the intervention. Kosovo brought that same lesson home in a different way: The lives of individual pilots in the sky were far more precious than those of the multitudes living on the ground.

This is not to say that every external intervention is imperialist, but it is to say that calling an intervention "humanitarian" cannot strip it of its politics. If the cold war led to a single-minded focus on imperial powers, the end of the cold war should not replace it with a single-minded focus on local despots. If the cold war generated a preoccupation with politics that lost sight of humanity, the end of the cold war should not be turned into an invitation—or a temptation—to disregard politics in the name of humanity.

Rather than calling for a type of intervention that is free from political accountability, we should be placing the question of accountability at the center of the discussion. Globalization shows that we have enhanced technological capacities, but it also underlines the need to put in place some kind of representative governing structure internationally. At the very least, it calls on us to examine the representativeness of the international arrangements that now exist, from the UN to the Bretton Woods institutions. The point is to make these institutions accountable to those who will suffer the consequences of the decisions they make.

★

Ronald Steel

Ronald Steel's most recent books are In Love With Night: The American Romance With Robert Kennedy *(Simon & Schuster) and* Temptations of a Superpower *(Harvard).*

All during the cold war American intervention was a dirty word on the left. It was usually taken to mean interfering in other countries to suppress radical movements, always under the catchall justification of anti-Communism. But over the past decade, with the disappearance of the ideological foe, what was once viewed as repressive and self-serving is now described as responsible and humanitarian. Enter "Operation Just Cause" in the Balkans and what is described as "virtuous intervention." Since the end of the cold war the United States has intervened with military force in five internal or regional conflicts: Somalia, Haiti, Iraq, Bosnia and Kosovo. In the first two the United States acted alone; in the others it was aided to one degree or another by allies. In each of these interventions the results have been, to say the least, disappointing. Saddam Hussein is still in power, Somalia is still ruled by warlords, Haiti is still mired in misery and oppression, Bosnia has been effectively partitioned into ethnic enclaves and Kosovo is being ethnically purified under the aegis of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

The "virtuous" part of these interventions has been more in the intentions than the consequences. Does this mean that the principle of humanitarian intervention is wrong or doomed to failure? No, but it does provide some important caveats.

First, interventions that are purely "humanitarian" and far removed from obvious concerns about national security can be sustained only if they are relatively cheap in lives and resources; have at least a veneer of international approval; confront situations that are genocidal, in that they threaten the very existence of a people; and can be resolved by military action. The five interventions of the past decade do not easily fill these requirements, and have fallen short of their ambitious goals.

By contrast, the one intervention that we should have undertaken, that we could have accomplished quickly and successfully, and that was shameful not to have undertaken was in Rwanda. There, with several thousand armed men we could have prevented the murder of an estimated 800,000. But it was only Africa, after all, and a few of our soldiers might have been shot, and it was all so primeval and distant, and it was hard to find any political advantage in it.

Where we have intervened the reasons have not always been exclusively humanitarian or virtuous: In Kuwait we also sought to protect the sources of cheap oil; in Somalia in part to get embarrassing TV coverage off the nightly news; in Haiti to stanch the flow of refugees to Florida; in Bosnia and Kosovo to assert America's continued leadership of Europe through NATO. The two major interventions described as "humanitarian"—Bosnia and Kosovo—did end the fighting and some of the human rights abuses. But only for a time. In Kosovo as in Bosnia, the peacekeepers cannot be withdrawn lest fighting resume. This is because the interventions ignored, and in some cases exacerbated, the political nature of the disputes. The issue in both cases was that of self-determination: the right of an ethnic group to secede from an existing state. In Bosnia, the United States (and the Europeans) endorsed this principle; in Kosovo it fought in support of an armed separatist group but maintains that it opposes the total detachment of the province from Serbia.

The trouble with the principle of ethnic self-determination is that its pursuit could lead to the destruction of a great many existing states and widespread warfare of the kind seen in places like Sri Lanka. Based on the exaltation of tribal loyalties, it invites majorities to be intransigent, furnishes pretexts for repression and leads to civil wars. It also denies the basis of our own social compact and our declared allegiance to multiculturalism.

There are times when foreign intervention in support of an ethnic group may be necessary: when its people are targeted for genocidal extermination (as were the Tutsis of Rwanda and the Jews of Nazi Europe), when they have been subjected to severe and repeated crimes against humanity, and when there have been persistent human rights abuses over a sustained period of time against an ethnic community.

In relatively few cases do these conditions apply. But that's all the more reason to draw the lines strictly so that intervention can be undertaken with maximum public support. Whether it will be successful depends on more than virtue or righteousness. It demands the commitment of all sides to a workable accord. It depends on being framed and enforced in such a way as to bring greater stability to the area. It requires support for domestic groups

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actively seeking a political settlement—not those simply using foreign intervention to further their own purposes. And it must be applied in such a way as to discourage resentful ethnic separatists from using foreign humanitarians to dismember existing states.

The more intervention strays from concerns over self-defense, the more subjective it becomes. To say that we have the right to intervene anywhere we choose to protect our self-defined "values and interests" is to open the door to other nations to defend their own—as they define them. A humanitarian impulse could, through abuse, become a geopolitical nightmare. This is why intervention should be an international undertaking—not because we need the physical support of other nations but to temper the dangers of self-righteousness and self-delusion.

★

Mary Kaldor

Mary Kaldor is director of the Global Civil Society program at the London School of Economics and author of New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era *(Stanford).*

In early February, violence broke out in Mitrovica in northern Kosovo, when groups of Serbs went from apartment to apartment throwing grenades and beating people. French KFOR troops withdrew to another part of town. UN police tried to intervene but were outnumbered. Eventually Danish troops came to their assistance, "acting on their own individual initiative," according to the BBC report, and "not at the orders" of the French commanding officer. According to the UN police, "the Danes were superb."

There are similar stories about Danish soldiers during the Bosnian war, where they disobeyed UN orders and fired back at Serbs attacking UN convoys. The Danes were criticized for not keeping to the UN mandate, but they were effective in protecting humanitarian corridors.

A genuine humanitarian intervention is much more like policing than warfighting or traditional peacekeeping. Soldiers are supposed to kill under orders. Their job is to fight in wars, which are supposed to be directed against other states. Unlike criminals, they are legitimate bearers of arms. Indeed, soldiers are considered heroes and not murderers; they kill to defend their countries and are applauded for their bravery. They do not feel morally responsible for the violence because they kill at a distance. They kill at a psychological distance because they are obeying someone else's orders, and often at a physical distance because they drop bombs or fire artillery shells and do not come face to face with their victims.

In contrast, police are supposed to enforce the rule of law domestically; their job is to protect the public from crime. They are expected to protect victims of crime and to capture criminals. They are expected to be present on the ground and to use their own initiative. They are supposed to save as many lives as possible, including the criminals who should stand trial. They are not supposed to kill or use violence except in defense and, within the rule of law, they are individually accountable for their actions.

Humanitarian intervention has to be understood as a new phenomenon, not simply in terms of goals but also in terms of methods. The idea of overriding state sovereignty in defense of human rights marks not just a conceptual break with a state-centered view of the world but a practical break with traditional forms of warfighting. Conventional war between states has become an anachronism. In contemporary wars in places like Eastern Europe or Africa, most violence is directed against civilians and involves an array of techniques, including population displacement, especially "ethnic cleansing"; atrocities like torture, systematic rape and massacres; and destruction of infrastructure and historic buildings. The aim is to control territory by sowing fear and hatred. This method of warfare directly violates the laws of war as well as the various postwar conventions and treaties on human rights.

In this type of war, humanitarian intervention has to be understood not as warfighting (intervention on one side or the other) or as peacekeeping (keeping the sides apart and/or guaranteeing cease-fires) but as international law enforcement. If contemporary wars have become a mixture of war and massive violations of human rights, then intervention has to become a mixture of policing and military operations. The aim is to restore legitimacy by countering the strategy of sowing fear and hatred with a strategy of winning "hearts and minds" by containing violence and operating within the framework of international law. This involves the direct protection of civilians and the arrest of individual war criminals. Instead of offensive operations against a military enemy, humanitarian intervention should be defensive and non-escalatory. Humanitarian intervention involves new techniques such as the creation of safe havens and safe zones, as well as humanitarian corridors.

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The role of UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina did represent a weak form of humanitarian intervention in the imposition of safe havens and humanitarian corridors. The problem was that the troops were poorly armed and ordered not to use force, and their lives were privileged over the lives of those they were supposed to protect.

In contrast, NATO's airstrikes against Serbia last year were much more in the tradition of warfighting. Although the goal was humanitarian intervention, the practice was conventional war. Instead of directly protecting civilians on the ground, NATO conducted offensive operations against the Serbian military machine, including its infrastructure in Serbia. This approach actually had counterproductive consequences, since it allowed Slobodan Milosevic to mobilize public opinion in Serbia and to speed up ethnic cleansing on the ground. It is true that in the end Milosevic capitulated, but the war led to a double ethnic cleansing. As Gen. Wesley Clark put it, you "cannot stop paramilitary murder on the ground with airplanes."

Forging a new type of humanitarian intervention requires a restructuring of armed forces. It means emphasis on ground troops rather than on sophisticated equipment for long-distance killing. But above all, it requires a cognitive and moral transformation in the way we understand the legitimate use of violence. Soldiers have to behave more like police officers. Whereas in military operations the aim is to minimize casualties on your own side, even if this means maximizing casualties on the other side, in humanitarian intervention the aim is to minimize all casualties, even if this means risking the lives of the soldiers/police officers. Whereas soldiers kill at a distance, humanitarian intervention means a presence on the ground. Above all, whereas soldiers obey orders unquestioningly and become cogs in a collective machine, the new international law enforcers have to take individual responsibility for local situations and make difficult judgments about how to respond based on their own knowledge and conscience. Even if they did disobey orders, the Danish peacekeepers seemed to understand, more than anyone else, what humanitarian intervention ought to mean.

★

David Rieff

David Rieff, a freelance writer, is the co-editor, with Roy Gutman, of War Crimes: What the Public Should Know *(Norton) and is currently completing a book on humanitarian aid.*

When we speak of humanitarian intervention, we cross the line into a world of Orwellian Newspeak. While I believe there is a case to be made for military interventions on humanitarian or human rights grounds, that does not manumit those who believe in them from calling them by their right name. And that name is war. The issue of whether such a war should be undertaken, either as a response to massive violations of human rights, the need to protect a civilian population from the depredations of its own government or some insurgent force, or simply to assure that relief supplies to the sick and the starving can be delivered or distributed safely, is a separate and, in certain ways, subsidiary point. The first thing that needs to be said is that when such figures as Kofi Annan, Bernard Kouchner (the head of the UN's transitional administration in Kosovo) and some human rights activists call for a new age of humanitarian intervention, they are actually calling for a new age of humanitarian war.

This reality has been partly occluded by the fact that it coincides and, for that matter, enjoys a symbiotic relationship with the rapid expansion of international legal norms that limit the rights of governments to mistreat their own people. In the eyes of its advocates, such laws are beyond politics and beyond ideology and compose a minimal set of standards to which all nations must be held. The problem, of course, is that while the law may have improved, the human condition has not. Such laws must either be enforced or they will become a utopian joke, the international legal equivalent of the Esperanto movement, rather like the various attempts, from the Hague conference of 1899, through the Kellogg-Briand pact, to the Hague conference of 1999, to "abolish" war. Even those who have the most immoderate hopes for this brave new world of international legal regimes, the first manifestations of which are the ad hoc tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia and the fledgling International Criminal Court, know perfectly well that they will do little to actually deter (as opposed to punish) genocide or crimes against humanity. To imagine such a thing is like proposing that a national justice system consist of judges but not police. To be effective, there must be at least the possibility of intervening militarily. Rwanda and Bosnia have taught us that much.

But however understandable the motivations, and however good the intentions of those who advocate it, humanitarian intervention is not, cannot be and should not be presented as a species of crime-stopping. It is warmaking, and no amount of appeals to international law or insistence that the motives of those who intervene are altruistic rather than self-interested can change this reality. If there were a world government, the notion of humanitarian intervention as crime prevention might have some basis in reality. But there is no such thing, nor will there be, certainly in the lifetime of anyone reading this issue of *The Nation*.

The confusion between war and police work is morally as well as intellectually noxious. Even conceding the debatable point—pressed these days by advocates of such institutions as the International Criminal Court and various other treaty regimes—that the law can actually stand beyond politics, warmaking cannot. For it is engaged in by states and, at least in democratic societies, must enjoy a measure of public consent. I am not referring here to the issue of whether the great powers can be depended on to behave morally more than intermittently, which seems to me to make the great the enemy of the good. Why not do something for Kosovo even if there is no will to do something for Sierra Leone? Rather, I am insisting that Clausewitz was right and that war is always an extension of politics.

If this is true, then the model of a systematic regime of humanitarian war, of the type Kofi Annan called for when he suggested that the world act not just in a few select areas of concern like Kosovo and East Timor but consistently throughout the globe, is wrong. Informed by a strange mixture of utopianism and despair, the doctrine, however well intended, is an effort to depoliticize reality. Such an effort is doomed to failure, because reality is not just human or legal; it is also always political. Obviously, politics can be grounded in morality, just as wars can be fought for good causes. But let us at least call things by their right names. ■

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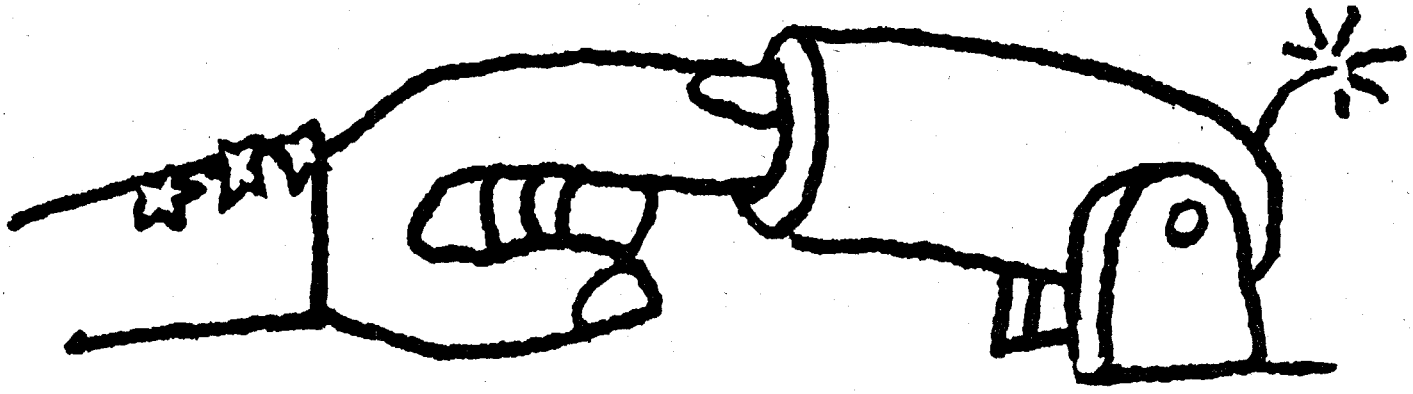
WHAT'S NEXT?

The world has changed, but so far US foreign policy seems more a matter of rearranging old ideas than coming up with new ones. Here are five fresh approaches to issues ranging from the environment to the world economy to foreign aid.



SCOTT MENCHIN

Ambassador Babbitt

WILLIAM GREIDER

The bloated triumphalism of America's global elites cries out for edgy satire—the literary hammer of Sinclair Lewis, the dark wit of Joseph Heller. Babbitt, it turns out, is now employed as a US diplomat, scrounging for sales to "emerging markets" around the world, while he looks forward to a brilliant career in investment banking. Milo Minderbinder, the supply sergeant who masterminded GI cartels in *Catch-22*, now heads an important financial conglomerate, where he supervises the world. Bored with wealth, Milo wants to run for the US Senate, though he feels he is ready to be President (actually, Milo thinks he would make a great king). Perhaps we need Evelyn Waugh to see the black humor in our end-of-empire statecraft.

The joke, of course, is about American pretensions to goodness. Laughter comes at the expense of those of us who insist that underneath the gaudy materialism—and apart from how our government behaves—most people do still aspire to nobler human values, including a tolerant, generous internationalism as opposed to neoimperial capitalism. One hesitates to use the words "American values" because the policy system is so adept at transmuting such soft sentiments into a pretext for hard-nosed action. Mention humanity and, next you know, cruise missiles are flying toward a "rogue nation" on behalf of peace and freedom. Worry aloud about African poverty and the apparel industry will dispatch sewing machines to equip the sweatshops that will start Africans' climb toward the American way of life. China's despotism? Not a problem, we are assured, but another opportunity for US industry and finance to teach folks about democracy (naturally the business guys need to cooperate with the CP cadres in order to advance the people's education).

What has happened since the Berlin wall fell, in other words, is a dizzying mind game—America's announced purposes in the world have been transformed, yet nothing much has changed. Bereft of an all-encompassing ideological conflict and lacking any plausible enemy, policy thinkers and their friends in business and banking simply moved some words around and rearranged the arguments, without disturbing any of the cold war's main functions and institutions. Recall that during the cold war the essential contest was described as a competition for military might, the burden of maintaining an ever-growing arsenal accompanied by the occasional shooting war to prove our sincerity. The globalization process was probably always more fundamental to the eventual triumph, but it was treated as secondary to the armaments. American market access and capital, plus military procurement and shared production, were employed as the essential glue to hold the alliance together. The closer a nation's borders to the Soviet sphere, the more it would likely receive in US economic benevolence (some countries may have invented an internal Communist threat in order to qualify for America's largesse).

These two realms—the military contest and the economic competition—have now been inverted in the establishment's policy book. The United States is still fighting for freedom, but now it is commerce, not bombs and bullets, that will liberate the hungry masses. The military maintains awesome firepower (in case a country like China strays from the capitalist road), but the advanced weapons are now used mainly to send diplomatic messages. The multinational missionaries, meanwhile, face the larger task of converting all those lost souls who were once the red adversaries. The bittersweet irony in this inversion is that com-

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mercial integration used to be a solution promoted by cold war critics as a rational alternative to the nuclear arms race. Their analysis was rejected as morally soft by the cold warriors.

The reinvented status quo, nimble though it seems, is already getting tattered by popular complaints. Attributing American values (freedom of speech, assembly, religion, press) to the amoral market processes of global capitalism is a real stretch—convincing only if people don't look too closely. Without the cold war to organize people's thinking, the actual consequences of globalization have lost political cover. Sure enough, attentive Americans are beginning to ask pointed questions. The "missile gap" is replaced by a "moral gap."

A foreign policy of globalized Babbittry cannot sustain itself because, quaint as this may sound, the core human values do matter to Americans, especially in foreign affairs. The cold war—set aside its many bloody contradictions—was always understood in popular opinion as a moral cause (defending hearth and home, freeing enslaved peoples) in which the United States played bighearted "good guy." Many on the left had trouble recognizing this dimension; the establishment seems to have forgotten it. The nation's virtuous self-image—a larger belief in the goodness of our purpose—is what allowed so many citizens to overlook or excuse the blatant contradictions, from supporting fascist generals in Latin America and Asia to the CIA's unconstitutional, criminal activities. Popular support waned—or even collapsed—whenever events vividly demonstrated that moral purpose was being sacrificed to ignoble means and ends.

US foreign policy is now anchored in an ahistorical syllogism that assumes industrial capitalism leads eventually to civil democracy.

Thus, commercialized diplomacy relies on public ignorance. Exposing the moral contradictions (a politics not so different from the cold war's) can push public opinion toward demanding a humane, principled foreign policy that would extricate America from its flawed and ultimately dangerous posture as the "good guy" emperor of everything. Most Americans—no longer worried whether there's a bear in the woods—have tuned out foreign affairs, and the establishment mistakes this for consent. But it is a vacuum waiting to be filled with provocative facts about the world. Educating and agitating on matters like sweatshops or environmental destruction have demonstrated that when people are confronted by the facts, they react with embarrassment or revulsion, often righteous anger. In the past decade, for instance, while the President preached globalization as the engine of democracy, the United States has actually shifted capital investment and market shares in trade away from the developing democracies, including once-favored allies, in favor of the authoritarian regimes (see the report "Dollars and Democracy" by David Jessup of the New Economy Information Service). Multinational guys have always liked doing business with a pro-growth dictator, someone who will dispose of clutter like labor unions and unruly free elections.

American foreign policy is now anchored in a peculiarly ahistorical syllogism that assumes industrial capitalism leads eventually to civil democracy (never mind Nazi Germany and other unfortunate exceptions). The dogma allows the US government to protect and forgive the most wretched governments in the meantime, ignoring a nation's crimes and injustices against its own citizens so long as the economy is moving toward correct accounting principles. This is not just cruel but also a little nutty. The rationale assumes that Americans at large will swallow their moral discomfort and remain silent—awaiting the happy day when a developing nation's new middle class is sufficiently large and self-confident to demand its rights. Meanwhile, just let capitalism do its thing.

South Korea and Taiwan are favorite examples of how rising prosperity did eventually lead to democracy after decades of military repression of political freedoms; Iran, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia are among the contrasting examples. Indonesia, in fact, was officially hailed as a democratizing nation, its corrupt regime courted and protected by US power, right up to the day that the massive popular uprising drove Suharto from power. His admirers then reversed course and explained Suharto's downfall as more proof that capitalism teaches people to think democracy (a little like boasting that prisons teach inmates to value their freedom). It is more accurate to say that the rise of industrial capitalism, especially under repressive governments but also in now-advanced nations like the United States, nearly always leads to intense civil conflict and violent explosions—social upheavals and popular mobilizations that may yield a more democratic society or may produce the opposite result. It all depends. The outcome will be determined by many complex factors, including the status of class formation and social cohesion and the degree of inequality and repression that a dictatorial regime can impose (and that wealthy partners like America have tolerated). Given the uncertainties, it seems naïve folly to base US foreign policy on Chamber of Commerce bromides. After all, the self-serving business logic really argues that profiting from human exploitation is OK because it makes people learn to think for themselves.

The politics of restoring a principled internationalism should begin with sustained attack on the idea and the reality of America as empire. Americans are not used to hearing their country described in such jarring terms, but I suspect they are closer to rebelling against the burdens of US imperial prerogatives than their leaders imagine. Some of their resistance is economic self-interest and some is moral principle, including an old but still honorable reluctance to muck around in other people's affairs. The choice is not between global engagement defined by the multinationals and right-wing, pull-up-the-drawbridges nationalism. The historic opening—ironically, advanced by the globalizing marketplace itself—is to envision a world without empires of any kind. A new system of international relations would acknowledge many diverse power centers but no single "good guy" empowered to dictate the ideological terms or to police disorders of his choosing. It would require new mediating institutions and the restructuring of old ones, starting from the common-sense reality that while all peoples may aspire to common human values, all of their governments do not. Rebuilding an international order that authentically represents the many, not just the powerful few, requires a willingness to make some hardheaded distinctions among nations, based on well-established principles of justice rather than commercial opportunities. The marketplace

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WHAT THE MEDIA ISN'T TELLING YOU

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About the Secret History of Lead In an exhaustive special report, *The Nation* showed how General Motors, Standard Oil and Du Pont colluded to make and market gasoline containing lead - a deadly poison - although there were safe alternatives. Abetted by the US government, they suppressed scientific evidence that lead kills. Still sold in countries all over the world, leaded gasoline continues to poison the planet.

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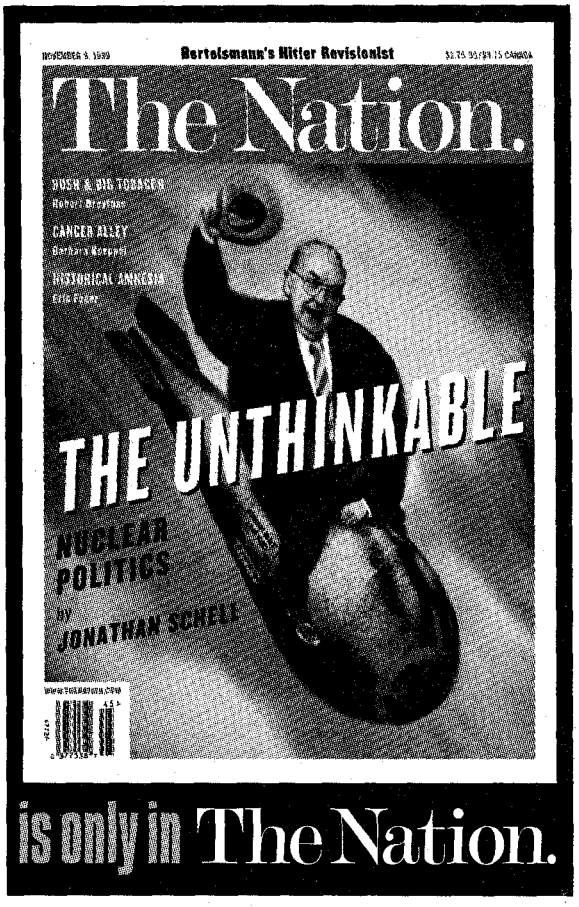

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is incapable of distinguishing between good guys and bad guys. Indeed, the profit motive often leads it to reward the latter and penalize the former.

The diplomacy to accomplish a new system will be fiendishly difficult, of course, but I have no doubt that most nations would respond positively, especially the aspiring poor, if the United States genuinely embraced the objective. Many of them have long been voicing various ideas of a new internationalism but have been stymied by cold war rivalry or the reigning imperatives of global commerce. The nasty joke on America's good-guy pretensions is that as a nation, we are the ones standing in the way of a more promising future.

Certainly, Bill Clinton ducked this generational challenge. Instead, his Administration chose to re-elaborate the cold war structure with commerce and finance on top. He expanded the NATO alliance as a market-opening device for arms manufacture, while rejecting the new international agreements on landmines and criminal justice. His model for future relations between rich and poor is NAFTA, with its colonizing financial rules that work well for business and banking but deliver loss and inequity to ordinary people on both sides of the border. Now Clinton ignores the contradictions and nominates China as a "normal" trading partner. China will prove the ultimate test of whether capitalism leads to democracy or simply leads to greater upheaval.

The missed opportunities are still present and obvious, awaiting a reinvigorated public to demand them. Oddly enough, the easier reforms (though still enormously difficult) are probably in the economic sphere. The laissez-faire orthodoxy is gradually breaking down—and dramatically enough that ordinary citizens see the dysfunctions and wonder where the next crisis will come from. The new movement challenging corporate-led globalization is articulating the reform agenda: imposing social values and fundamental fairness on the trading system and the behavior of multinationals, restraining the reckless excesses of global finance, establishing accountability from enterprise and greater self-determination for developing nations, restructuring international financial institutions to represent all interests, rich and poor, or else shutting them down if reform proves impossible. These and other objectives are all doable, but only if the US government comes to its senses.

History, it is true, does not offer many examples of an imperial regime recognizing long-term self-interest and deciding to resign its role. Dominating others, telling them how to behave, seems like the natural order to those who are exercising the power. Empire usually resists self-reform and accumulates its vulnerabilities until one day its power is dismantled by new realities. This fate, I have no doubt, lies ahead for America's good-guy imperialists. It will depend on the rest of us to avert it. ■

AMERICA'S OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE PREVENTING CONFLICT, NOT INCREASING US POWER.

Seeking a Stable World

SHERLE R. SCHWENNINGER

American foreign policy in the post–cold war world has been a tale of two Americas. One America, the revolutionary power, has sought to tear down national barriers in the name of globalization and to remake the world in America's liberal market image. The other America, the status quo power, has worked to preserve US dominance. Over the past decade, these conflicting political/cultural tendencies have found common expression in a foreign policy best described as one of US triumphalism.

SCOTT MENCHIN

The voice of another America has largely been missing from our foreign policy discourse during this period. That is the voice of America the world-order power—the generous America that helped rebuild Europe with the Marshall Plan, the farsighted America that envisioned the UN, America the principled yet pragmatic power that forged great-power cooperation around common world-order goals. This America is needed more than ever in the early twenty-first century as a balance to America's revolutionary instincts and as a corrective to our status quo tendencies.

Sherle R. Schwenninger is a senior fellow at the World Policy Institute and a consultant to the Project on Development, Trade and International Finance at the Council on Foreign Relations.

America's revolutionary impulse has been most evident in the role the United States has played as the official sponsor of—and moving political force behind—the revolution in world affairs popularly known as globalization. It has been this America that has relentlessly pushed trade and financial liberalization, that has rewritten the rules of humanitarian intervention and from whose soil thousands of nongovernmental organizations have campaigned for human rights and environmental causes.

A revolution as sweeping as globalization simultaneously creates the need for a new order, for a new way of managing transnational relations. But it is here where the tendencies of America the status quo power have come into play. Washington's answer to the order question has not been to reinvent global governance but rather to fall back on the comfortable notion of US dominance. An otherwise forward-looking Clinton Administration surrendered early on to the bipartisan appeal of dominance—even when opportunity or crisis called for moving beyond the status quo. It pushed NATO expansion, for example, not because an enlarged NATO represented an appropriate security structure for post–cold war Europe but because NATO was the institution that Washington controlled.

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If the Clinton Administration has had a theory of world order to go along with its emphasis on dominance, it has been one of democratic liberal market convergence. The world of liberalized capital flows would be made safe if other countries became more like us—if they adopted similar legal systems, the same accounting practices and adhered to the same democratic principles. World order would derive not just from good state-to-state relations but from the quality of governance in each of the world's countries.

It is easy to see why this utopian notion appealed to both America's revolutionary and status quo instincts. But it was bound to fail not only because it ran into the deeply rooted cultural and political practices of other nations but because the United States lacked the will and resources needed to micromanage the makeover of other societies. The discrepancy between America the revolutionary power and America the status quo power has left us with a huge governance gap in world affairs: a mismatch between the brave new world of global markets and failing states, on the one hand, and the institutional arrangements and great-power understandings needed to deal with them, on the other.

The discrepancy between American revolutionary and status quo instincts has left us with a huge governance gap in world affairs.

America the revolutionary power is on the right track in one major sense: A globalized information age does offer the promise of a better life for the great majority of the world's population. But in order for that promise to be realized, order-keeping institutions and global regulation are needed in some form—whether in the form of great-power understandings or democratically accountable international bodies or as a result of the moral suasion of transnational civil society. Otherwise, the tyranny of the market and of international chaos will simply replace the tyranny of oligarchic state power and cold war empires.

The challenge is to figure out how to balance America's incurably revolutionary character with world-order considerations in its foreign policy. The ultimate goal of a world-oriented foreign policy is not to increase America's power; rather, it is to increase the capacity of the international system to contain large-scale violence, promote democracy and economic development, and avoid environmental destruction. Given this overarching goal, how does a world-oriented foreign policy differ from US foreign policy of the past decade?

First, such a foreign policy would be more concerned with shaping the architecture of the emerging international system than with micromanaging the socioeconomic systems of individual countries. Our objective should not be to make every country a liberal democracy but to create a structure of world order that would make it easier for countries to move in that direction if they so choose. Geopolitically, our principal concern should be with avoidance (and deterrence, if necessary) of great-power conflict and prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We should help set up the machinery and the rules for international peacekeeping, but we should leave the work of peacekeeping and nation-building to middle-level powers and to a UN-like body, which, if given adequate resources, would be better suited for these tasks. Economically, our main worry should be about getting global macroeconomic policy right, about establishing a level trade and investment playing field for developed and developing countries alike, and about reforming an international financial system that is prone to booms and busts. But we should leave the micromanagement of other countries' reforms as well as democracy-building to nongovernmental organizations and international development agencies with better track records in these areas.

Second, our principal foreign policy objective should be to find common interest with other centers of power on key world-order issues and to involve them in constructive long-range world-order endeavors—whether it be the spread of information technologies or the eradication of disease. But in order to build such consensus, the United States must be willing to forgo from time to time its maximalist goals, whether they be a world of totally unfettered capital flows or a world rid of Saddam Hussein. Better to have Russian cooperation on controlling nuclear weapons than to have an even larger NATO. Better to have an international agreement on the minimal goal of containing Saddam's Iraq than to have France and Russia undermining that goal because they don't agree with our policy of rollback. We need to relearn that we do not need to get our way on every issue to have a world order that is generally favorable to US interests and values.

Third, a world-order-oriented foreign policy would be more willing to share power as a way of enlisting other powers to assume more of the burden for maintaining peace and prosperity. To date, Washington has been eager to talk about burden-sharing but reluctant to offer any real power-sharing—witness the US proposal for cutting its share of UN funding. But it would be in our long-term interest if the United States were to strike a bargain with Europe and Japan whereby Washington gave up some control of international institutions, like the IMF and World Bank, in return for an increase in their contributions. An America-centric world order is ultimately unstable not only because it causes other countries to resist it but because US resources and willpower are limited. Indeed, the principal problem of world order is the huge gap between the demand for international public goods (military protection, development assistance, etc.) and the supply. We can close this gap only by leveraging the resources of other powers—not just those of Europe and Japan but those of other middle-level powers like Australia and Canada and potential powers like India and Russia; not just states but major corporations and civil-society groups as well. Closing the public-goods gap is critical to rebalancing the imbalance between threats and incentives that has developed in Western policy since the end of World War II. The resort to sanctions or the cutoff of international assistance has increased many times over, but the positive inducements the West has to offer have declined in relation to the changes demanded. Only future membership in the European Union (and possibly NAFTA) seems to offer elites in developing countries the incentives they need to undertake the painful reforms envisioned by trade and financial liberalization. A world-order-oriented foreign policy

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would make expanding these clubs an international priority.

Fourth, a world-order perspective would understand that US dominance will not last forever and that it would be a wise use of US power to build longer-term institutional arrangements favorable to its interests and values that would outlast US dominance. It would also understand that effective global governance requires international bodies that pool state sovereignty and command popular support. That does not mean the UN and the IMF as we now know them, but institutions that are both more focused and more accountable. It might mean, for example, a world security authority for peacekeeping and nation-building that while still answerable to the UN Security Council, is nonetheless separately constituted and more professionally run. As to the question of democratic accountability, a world-order-oriented foreign policy would increase the democratic accountability of international institutions not by letting NGOs have a seat at the negotiating table, as some have proposed, for in the end NGOs are no more democratic than the multinational corporations they criticize. Rather, it would do so by making greater use of interparliamentary committees, by including elected Congressional and parliamentary figures in the policy-making process and by eventually adding a parliamentary wing of elected officials to intergovernmental organizations.

Finally, a world-order-oriented foreign policy would make middle-class economic development—not trade and financial liberalization per se—the centerpiece of its international agenda, and in so doing it would place greater emphasis on domestic demand-led growth as a way of making globalization and the world economy work for more people everywhere. In light of the demographic trends in the advanced industrialized countries, export-led growth offers diminishing returns for emerging economies aspiring to become middle-class societies. To sustain recent growth rates, developing countries will need to do more to tap the growth of domestic demand—or, in the case of small countries without the potential to develop large-scale domestic markets, to gain access to developing as well as developed markets. Indeed, further world economic growth depends on unleashing the internal demand potential of large emerging economies.

But if domestic-led growth is to work, further reforms in the international financial system will be required—not just to make the system more stable but to give working people in developing countries access to reasonably priced credit for housing, education and small-business start-ups. And that means a US-led international program designed to deepen financial markets in developing countries and to provide them with a stable currency—possibly through dollarization or euro-ization or through the creation of synthetic currencies based on the dollar, euro and the yen. Such an effort would go hand in hand with the goal of insuring a central role for the dollar in any future monetary system, which will be critical to our own economic well-being.

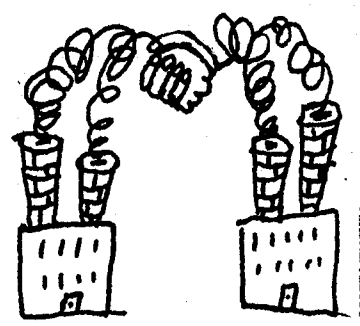
A world-order-oriented foreign policy would find few true believers in the American polity today, dominated as it is by unilateral "conservatives," on the one hand, who want to keep the world at bay while still dictating to it, and unilateral liberals, on the other, who want to reshape the world to fit their liberal agenda. Yet it may still be the best way to promote a world all Americans would want their children to live in. ■

WHY AMERICA NEEDS A GLOBAL GREEN DEAL.

A Green Foreign Policy

MARK HERTSGAARD

The power of the market, and of the giant corporations that dominate it, is the overriding political fact of our time. Traditionally, we think of foreign policy as something conducted among nation-states. But when fifty-one of the world's biggest economies are corporations rather than countries, old definitions no longer apply. To be realistic, a modern foreign policy must be directed at global corporations as well as at other countries.



SCOTT MENCHIN

This is especially true of environmental foreign policy. As much as OPEC and the world's governments, it is Exxon and the rest of the fossil-fuels industry that will determine our species' response to climate change. This is partly because they have the money to pay for campaign contributions and misleading advertising that influences politicians to drag their feet on the issue, but it's also because the companies control the energy production process; if they keep extracting and burning more fossil fuel—while also delaying the transition to efficiency and renewables—the problem will get worse no matter what is written in international agreements like the Kyoto Protocol, signed by governments in December 1997. Indeed, Exxon chairman Lee Raymond visited China a few weeks before the Kyoto conference to urge his hosts not to let unfounded fears of climate change reduce China's fossil-fuel consumption. Likewise, it is the corporate proponents of globalization more than their governmental counterparts who are most insistent about spreading the American model of hyperconsumerism around the planet, with all the additional environmental damage that implies.

Governments are not without considerable power of their own, however, which is why a forceful, creative environmental

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foreign policy could do so much to alter our disastrous current course. True, capital's global reach—its ability to play governments, workers and communities in one country off against those in another—gives it many advantages. But to prosper, capital still needs many things that only governments can offer: enforcement of the rule of law and respect for private property; a healthy, educated work force; a social infrastructure of communications, transportation and amenities; and much else. Therefore, astute government officials, especially in nations that are stable and boast large internal markets like the United States, should be able to bargain with corporations from a position of some strength. Moreover, much of the damage corporations inflict on ecosystems is now done with the encouragement of governments (and their proxies, like the World Bank) in the form of unwise subsidies and lax or nonexistent regulation. Since the 1992 Earth Summit, the World Bank has spent $13.6 billion on fossil-fuel development in China, Russia and elsewhere, subsidizing in the process such corporate giants as Exxon, while devoting only 1 percent of its energy loans to efficiency projects. Governments need only reverse such policies to effect great environmental improvement.

Policy-makers must recognize that the environmental crisis threatens consequences no less dangerous than wars and trade disputes.

Of course, governments must want to do the right thing. Which is why a discussion of a corporate-savvy environmental foreign policy presupposes certain conditions not yet in place, especially the comprehensive campaign finance reform needed to free government policy from the grip of big-money interests.

But let's dream awhile. Let's assume that these conditions have somehow come into being and federal officials are seeking to formulate a principled, effective environmental foreign policy. What would it look like?

First, environmental values would be at the heart, not the margins, of American foreign policy. Just as the United States says it supports democracy and private enterprise in its overseas dealings, so it should support ecological sustainability. Specifically, an environmental foreign policy would: seriously address climate change; reverse subsidies and other policies that hasten rainforest destruction and the epidemic of plant and animal extinctions it causes; promote female literacy and equality as the surest step toward lower birth and poverty rates; adopt trade, aid and investment guidelines that promote solar energy, "drip" irrigation and mass transit, rather than fossil fuels, private cars and industrial-scale, chemically dependent agriculture; halt the dumping of toxic waste in poor nations; and require labeling and testing of all genetically modified organisms before allowing them onto the market.

Second, the President must make it clear that environmental issues matter in America's foreign conduct. Bill Clinton has, on the contrary, relegated them to the periphery. In pushing NAFTA, the WTO and other parts of his free-trade agenda, for example, Clinton insisted that environmental and labor considerations be handled in side agreements, rather than in the main agreements. That's not good enough. Policy-makers must recognize that the environmental crisis threatens consequences no less dangerous than shooting wars and trade disputes do. Unchecked climate change, for example, will swamp the coastal regions where one-third of the world's people live and generate more killer storms like 1998's Hurricane Mitch, bringing misery to millions and greatly worsening the already overwhelming global refugee problem. (Credible analysts project that the 25 million environmentally induced refugees in the world today could increase to 50 million or more by the year 2010.)

The environment therefore must be elevated to the same priority status within foreign-policy-making as security, economics and politics. In practical terms that means, among other things, assigning to the environment Cabinet-level authority, budgets and access to the President. The Clinton Administration took a step in this direction in 1993, when it created the Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs position and appointed former Senator Timothy Wirth to the job. But the move, though impressive on paper—Wirth ranked very high in the State Department hierarchy—had little effect on overall policy, largely because Clinton and his Secretaries of State made it clear by their inattention how little they really cared about the Under Secretary's issues. Without concrete, outspoken support from the very top, the culture of the foreign policy bureaucracy will not change. Foreign-service officers must see that environmental expertise leads to the kind of quick promotion and choice assignment usually associated with security and political specializations.

Next, a substantive reform. It's one thing to give lip service to environmental values, another to integrate them into policy-making. One mechanism that could help is the environmental impact assessment, or EIA. Introduced thirty years ago in the National Environmental Policy Act, the EIA is now a basic tool of domestic environmental policy. In effect, it forces government and corporate officials to acknowledge the likely environmental consequences of a proposed course of action, even as it gives citizen groups a procedural basis for opposing or influencing the action, thus democratizing decision-making.

Applying the EIA to foreign policy should yield similar benefits. If our trade policy with China, for example, were subjected to an EIA, the findings would confront US officials with some awkward facts: that the United States does much more in China to encourage expanded coal use than energy efficiency, even though China is already the world's second-largest producer of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change; that the World Bank, over which Washington has decisive influence, displays an even more lopsided pro-coal bias; that a policy that promoted energy efficiency would lower China's coal use by 50 percent; and that while today's policy delivers great benefits to fossil-fuels companies, the efficiency alternative would yield comparable benefits to other American-based companies even as it produced far more jobs for American workers. Faced with this information, US officials might of course still make the environmentally incorrect decision. But they would find it more difficult to do so, especially if they were being monitored by citizens' groups, the media and Congress.

EIAs would, in short, institutionalize an environmental perspective on foreign policy. They would not guarantee that envi-

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ronmental values always triumphed, but they would formally insert them into the official debate—a necessary first step—and help create the political space in which to fight for alternative approaches.

And what should those be? The temptation is to offer a laundry list of measures to encourage environmentally sustainable practices in all spheres of human activity, from agriculture and energy to construction and transportation. The truth is, experts here and abroad for the most part agree on what changes are needed to bring humanity's behavior into balance with the natural systems that make life possible on earth. The trick is to figure out how to make those changes happen.

Which brings us back to the power of the market. Assuming that the market will be with us for years to come, we must find a way to make it compatible with environmental survival. Not an easy task, but not impossible either. The way to start, I believe, is for the United States to launch a Global Green Deal: a program to retrofit civilization environmentally from top to bottom—and in the process create the biggest jobs and business stimulus program of our time. Making use of both market incentives and government leadership, a Global Green Deal would do for environmental technologies in the twenty-first century what government and industry have done so well for computer and Internet technologies at the end of the twentieth: launch their commercial takeoff.

Under a Global Green Deal, the government need not spend more money—only shift existing subsidies away from environmentally dead-end technologies like coal and gas-guzzling automobiles. Every year, the General Services Administration buys about 50,000 new cars for official use from Detroit. Under the Global Green Deal, Washington would tell Detroit that from now on the cars have to be hybrid-electric or hydrogen-fuel-cell cars. Soon, carmakers would be climbing the learning curve and offering the competitively priced green cars consumers say they want.

We know this model of government pump-priming works; it's why so many of us have computers on our desks today. America's computer companies began learning to produce today's affordable systems during the sixties, while benefiting from long-term subsidies and guaranteed markets under contract to the Pentagon and NASA. Thirty years later, the United States is still reaping the benefits: The cyberrevolution is fueling one of the most extraordinary economic expansions in history.

The same principles would apply overseas. As noted above, the potential market for energy efficiency is huge in China (and throughout the Third World, for that matter). If Washington were smart, it would help the Chinese buy lots of this technology rather than the fossil fuels our tax dollars currently subsidize, thus producing lots of jobs and profits for American workers and companies, while at the same time fighting climate change.

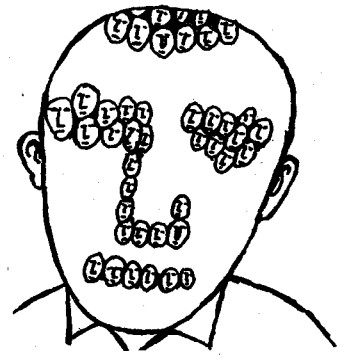
We need an environmental foreign policy that recognizes the power of the market without surrendering to it. In today's world, every government ends up cutting a deal with capital. The goal should be to make it a deal that also works for the rest of us. A Global Green Deal would be no silver bullet. But it would allow the United States to lead by example and begin to "green" economic behavior around the world—and that would be a foreign policy worth having. ■

NGOs SHOULD BE MADE MORE EFFECTIVE IN STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY.

The New Civic Globalism

KUMI NAIDOO

During the eighties many activists in the United States and elsewhere embraced a simple but evocative slogan: "think globally, act locally." The message: In acting at the local level, one needed to understand how global forces affected local reality. In short, trying to tackle local issues without understanding the ever-increasing power of global processes was tactically inappropriate.



SCOTT MENCHIN

By the mid-nineties, activists, particularly from the global South, began to question this logic. Devaki Jain, for example, one of the founders of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), a grouping from the poor countries of the world, challenged this slogan. She asked whether this did not trap local people solely in local interventions when in fact many of the causes being pursued locally now need to be advanced in the range of global forums and processes that has become so influential. She argued that perhaps we need to turn this slogan on its head and instead "think locally, act globally."

Rajesh Tandon, the former chair of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, and I have recently suggested that social activists need to think both locally and globally and act both locally and globally since the realities of globalization now deprive us of the luxury of national parochialism. This rise toward global activism around a range of issues is happening precisely at a time when many citizens of the world have, for the first time, achieved representative electoral democracy at the national level. Even so, we often have the form of democracy but not the substance.

Democracy should not be reduced to the singular act of casting a ballot once every four or five years. Even in societies with longstanding democratic traditions, democracy is under threat,

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with high levels of citizen disillusionment and loss of faith in public institutions. More and more, citizens active in various global alliances are challenging basic notions of governance and democracy, including the very nature of the nation-state.

Jessica Mathews, the president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, wrote in 1997 of a "power shift" in which governments and intergovernmental organizations are increasingly having to recognize that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other nonstate actors have become real power brokers in various political, social and economic processes. Lester Salamon of Johns Hopkins University speaks of a "global associational revolution," which he argues is as significant to the twentieth century as the development of the nation-state system. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan observes that the "growing pains felt by civil society are also being felt in the wider international community. The international community, after all, is a work in progress. It has failed many tests. But it passes much more often, if still not often enough."

Today we have a range of global civil-society actors. These include international membership organizations, such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace, but also autonomous international NGOs such as Human Rights Watch. Civil-society networks have arisen around specific areas of concern, such as the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Jubilee 2000, which campaigns for the cancellation of Third World debt. Numerous antinuclear civic action groups exercise an enormous influence over proliferation and security issues.

International civil-society organizations and networks are serving to check the power and practice of the nation-state system.

It is striking, however, that despite significant cultural, social, economic and political differences, there is a growing amount of common ground. This includes, for example, seeking to establish a code of ethics for the nonprofit community within a country, sharing concerns about growing inequality in the world and about the environment. An important feature of this trend is the way NGOs and other civil-society groups have been able to push their agendas through important UN conferences. In all the major UN conferences during the nineties civil-society participation has been visible, if not vibrant, persuasive and effective. Kicking off this trend at a high-profile level was the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Some 2,400 NGO delegates attended the substantive part of the conference alongside government leaders, as well as an NGO forum with about 17,000 participants. This was followed by the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and the Beijing Women's Conference, both in 1995, and others. While the United States has not aggressively tried to block civil-society participation in these conferences and in fact promoted participation in some, it has often undercut the process by failing to ratify the outcomes of such conferences formally.

The impact of what is now simply called Beijing—shorthand for the multitude of recommendations to come out of the women's conference—has been far-reaching. Beijing has added impetus at the national level to the push for greater gender equality, with specific interventions around women in politics and in society more generally. Issues that were struggling to find their way into mainstream policy agendas, such as the troubling trend toward persistent and, in places, increasing levels of violence against women, have now achieved a much higher profile. In this process, it is not only the longstanding democracies that have put forward innovative ideas and strategies. For example, the work done by the Women's Budget Initiative in South Africa, which seeks to interrogate the government budgeting processes through a gender lens, and indeed to institutionalize gender criteria in budgeting, has offered new insights to the world. This expansion of civil-society networks, organizations and activity has been accompanied by an increasing flurry of academic work on the subject, with a mountain of new literature written over the past ten years.

What are the implications of this new civic globalism? On the positive side, citizen-inspired organizations are developing the capacity to relate globally to the organized power of global business as well as global institutions such as the UN, World Bank and so on. This trend has allowed activists at the national level who might not be able to get a foot in the door with their own governments to be able to push for global commitments. For example, governments that signed the agreement arising from the Copenhagen summit are being pressured by NGO groups at the national level to meet the specified targets concerning poverty and social development. In some cases where governments have ignored international treaties, civil-society groups are energized by the campaign to push for ratification of such treaties. Yet many in civil society remain, understandably, skeptical about the long distance between ratification and implementation.

Although some may believe that the recent growth of global activism has successfully created a global civil society, realistically we have not yet reached that stage. We have developed only transnational civil-society movements, because there are no networks or organizations that can claim representation in all the countries of the world. For example, many "global" organizations do not have significant representation in Indonesia, Japan, Russia or China, all countries with large populations. The other problem is that global civil-society networks are often driven by English, and sometimes French, as the lingua franca, which therefore excludes many important voices.

Without a doubt, the phenomenon of this new civic globalism has been accelerated by the emerging information technology. It is worth noting, however, that while many speed off on the information superhighway, more than a third of the world's population has no access to telephones, let alone other information technologies. There are more telephone connections in Manhattan than in sub-Saharan Africa. Again, these disparities underscore realities about who are global players and who are not.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses, international civil-society organizations and networks are serving to check the power and practice of the nation-state system. They have challenged the practice of international law, and, perhaps most important, they have challenged the self-interested geopolitical policies of the wealthy nations of the world. In this respect, some citizens see their global activism as a way to undermine the nation-state system. However, others emphasize the positive role that the nation-state system

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can play; indeed, many activists from poorer countries now see the need for effective, accountable and efficient nation-state infrastructures to insure that the negative aspects of globalization do not go unchecked.

Unfortunately, not all cross-border citizen activity is necessarily positive. We have also seen the rise of intolerant, violent, racist and sexist groups organizing across national boundaries, with many exploiting the Internet. The race-hate pages on the Internet continue to grow at an alarming rate. Thus, although we should continue to promote global activism and the positive impacts that it can have, we must keep in mind that there is now more work to be done to counter the negative aspects of this phenomenon.

How can nonprofit public-interest groups and movements such as Jubilee 2000, Transparency International, Amnesty International, Greenpeace and others get a seat at the global table? What global institutional infrastructure is needed to support civil society's global emergence? At the heart of these questions is the challenge of representation. Many governments, as well as some international bureaucrats, are quick to point out that most of these global organizations, and indeed their national constituent parts, are self-appointed and are not elected or accountable to a clearly defined constituency. On the other hand, governments should not take a victory at the ballot box as a blank check to behave as they wish till the next election comes around. The key challenge is how to insure that there are effective ways in which we can connect local civil-society action with national and global civil-society movements. Arising out of that is the question of civil society's legitimate right to participate as a partner in making and implementing global decisions and policies. Rajesh Tandon and I suggest that "global formations of civil society must become the voice of citizens at global forums without getting bogged down with the formalization and bureaucratic patterns of representation."

Another challenge is whether civic activists are not sometimes too purist or too self-righteous in their stridency to be able to reach practical accommodations with their opponents. In this context, the suggestion is made that perhaps civic globalism is just no substitute for democratic governance. The argument goes that just as charity and volunteerism are probably no substitute for governmental solutions to big problems like healthcare, poverty and education, global activists may serve a role, but one confined to being the outside catalyst for social change.

What, then, is a global space? Is every local space today a truly global space or are global spaces defined as the locations of institutional and economic power? Far too often when people talk about global processes and the centers of global power they are focused exclusively on Washington, New York, Geneva, Paris and London. This raises the question of the North-South divide within global activism. It is not uncommon to hear activists from the South raise criticisms of the manner in which they feel dominated by their counterparts in the North, even though they are notionally all on the same side. For example, Jubilee 2000 now has a specific component called Jubilee South: Activists from the world's poor countries wanted to carve out a space to engage in dialogue with one another without their Northern counterparts. Related to this is the challenge of cultural relativity. Within a single network, exactly what constitutes a healthy civil society, for example, can vary considerably from society to society.

It is in this context that the US government should be doing more to enable the NGO community to be more effective. Rather than bask in the reality of the United States being the only world superpower, the United States should develop a more respectful attitude to both the formal intergovernmental institutions, particularly the UN, and the various international civil-society institutions. For starters, the United States should invest more in the UN system (starting by paying its dues more diligently) rather than carve out a life for itself based on notions of hegemony. It should ratify the various international treaties that it was part of creating, such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. In the coming years, the US government, along with other governments, will have to negotiate a new set of power relations with an ever-stronger civil-society movement around national and international policy issues.

It is important that we recognize that this move toward global activity is not simply a phenomenon of the nineties. Trade unions have long organized at the international level, as have religious movements. The World Conference on Religion and Peace, which was set up in 1970, brings together the world's major religions around the theme of peace and social justice. There is no doubt, though, that the Internet has accelerated this process. These trends are likely to continue, with several transnational networks and organizations emerging more rapidly. They will probably grow in sophistication and will also face a range of challenges pertaining to legitimacy, operational efficiency and political viability. In meeting these challenges, there will be many voices that will stress that at the heart of this enterprise is the struggle for accountable democracy.

As has been said, global activism may not be a substitute for democratic governance, but it can certainly play an important role in improving and strengthening it. For example, the formal institution of electoral systems does nothing to guarantee genuine democracy. We have the form of democracy without the substance. In fact, electoral democracy runs the risk of becoming in many societies a preordained elite-legitimization process. To counterbalance this, strong citizen-inspired activism is going to be needed at the local, national and global levels. ■

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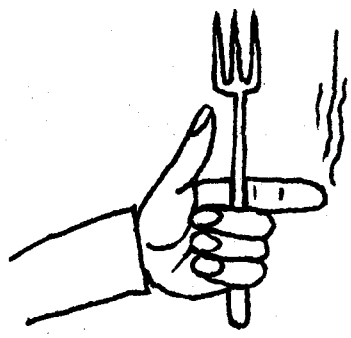
AMERICA SPENDS BILLIONS OVERSEAS—BUT MAINLY IN MILITARY AID, NOT DEVELOPMENT.

Let Them Eat Guns

ROBERT L. BOROSAGE

According to a recent report by the Council on Foreign Relations, "The average American believes we spend 18 percent of the federal budget on foreign affairs, while thinking we should spend only 6 percent. In reality, foreign affairs spending, the bully pulpit of America's strength overseas, is now only 1 percent of the federal budget—a little more than one penny of every federal tax dollar."



SCOTT MENCHIN

This argument has been the centerpiece of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's campaign for more funds for international activities. "That 1 percent," she argues, "may well determine 50 percent of the history that is written about the era." But although the Secretary's cause is a good one, her argument is profoundly misleading, for it excludes the bulk of US international spending—the military budget. Americans have it about right when the military is included; we spend about 17 percent of our total budget on national security and international activities, with the military consuming 95 percent of the total sum. Indeed, in the coming year, the military will capture more than half the entire federal discretionary budget—money for everything the government does from the FBI to Head Start—excluding only mandatory spending (primarily, interest on the national debt and entitlements like Social Security and Medicare).

Spending on international affairs other than the military, when measured in constant dollars, has been declining steadily since 1980. From 1992 through 1997, funding dropped an average of about 6 percent annually. Under the projected balanced-budget agreements, this nonmilitary funding is slated to be cut another 13 percent by 2002. By that year, nonmilitary international spending will be at about half its average level in the eighties and at its lowest level since 1955.

Were Washington to match the aid level of our allies, significant additional resources would be available for international assistance. If the United States spent, as our allies do, an average of 0.4 percent of its GDP on overseas development aid, it would quadruple its aid outlays to more than $27 billion per year. If it invested as generously as Sweden does (nine-tenths of 1 percent of GDP), its spending would rise to about $76 billion a year.

But this parsimony is not because Americans don't support an expansive role abroad. The United States devotes more than 4 percent of its GDP to foreign policy and military spending, compared with Japan's 1.3 percent and the 2.7 percent average of our NATO allies. That amounts to $110 billion more per year than the amount spent by our allies—but we spend the money on the military, not on diplomacy or development assistance.

The AIDS plague in Africa threatens the worst global catastrophe since the bubonic plague that killed one-fourth of Europe's population in the fourteenth century. In countries like Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe, one in four young people is HIV-positive. Experience in Uganda shows that with strong government action and adequate external assistance, the disease's spread can be stemmed. UN agencies estimate that an additional $2 billion a year is desperately needed. In January the United States made Africa the focus of a special session of the UN Security Council. Vice President Gore made a dramatic speech on the global threat posed by the plague and offered to increase our contribution by all of $150 million to help fight it. This grand gesture comes in a year when Senator John McCain detailed $5 billion of "pure pork" in the Pentagon budget—weapons and projects the Pentagon didn't even ask for. The House just voted for $2 billion to pay for US troops in Kosovo. But for a plague that threatens to decimate sub-Saharan Africa, the Administration promises less than 10 percent of that. We don't do plagues. We do guns.

The starvation of US diplomatic and aid budgets contributes to and reflects the post–cold war US default in developing innovative public aid programs and building strong multilateral institutions. Hopes that the UN will develop a truly multinational peacekeeping force have been frustrated. The UN's activities have been cribbed by the US failure to pay its debts. The harsh contrast between the treatment accorded Russia after the cold war and that provided Germany, Japan and the European allies after World War II reflects both conservative ideology and the starvation of public aid commitments. Whereas Germany received assistance to rebuild and was given leeway to control its markets and currency while reviving employment, Russia—facing a far greater challenge—was bludgeoned into opening its markets and making the ruble convertible immediately. Assistance was limited, contingent and parsimonious. Russia was treated more like Germany after World War I than Germany after World War II, with devastating effect. The United States devoted about 2 percent of its annual GDP to the Marshall Plan after World War II, far more than the entire US aid and international affairs budget now consumes.

As the Asian financial crisis spread to Russia, Brazil and elsewhere, the limits and perils of the US strategy became clear. "America has wanted global leadership on the cheap," Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs, an architect of US policy in Russia, argues. "It was desperate for the developing world and post-Communist economies to buy into its vision, in which globalization, private capital flows and Washington advice would overcome the obstacles to shared prosperity, so that pressures on the rich countries to do more for the poorer countries could be con-

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Robert L. Borosage is co-director of the Campaign for America's Future (www.ourfuture.org). This article is excerpted from an essay in a collection edited by Martha Honey and Tom Barry, Global Focus: U.S. Foreign Policy at the Turn of the Millennium *(St. Martin's).*

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tained.... In this way, the United States would not have to shell out real money to help the peaceful reconstruction of Russia; or to ameliorate the desperate impoverishment and illness in Africa."

Sachs is surely right about the limits on US aid. With an expanded budget for international affairs and humanitarian aid, the United States might address real emerging security concerns—disease, crushing debt burdens, global warming, clean water. We might even decide to help relieve Russia's terrible agonies. The effects could be both sweeping and vital in building a more prosperous and peaceful world. But Sachs is wrong about the money. The United States is "shelling out real money" on foreign affairs—but it is being spent on military activity, not on diplomacy, institution-building or assistance. Again, the contrast with the end of World War II is instructive. Then, the United States demobilized and cut the military budget by 90 percent in three years, freeing up resources for the major commitment to the Marshall Plan. Ten years after the end of the cold war, the US budget remains at about 85 percent of its average cold war level.

The current consensus ought to be vulnerable, simply because Pentagon spending levels are ridiculously high. The United States could save $100 billion a year and still maintain the strongest military in the world. Experts like former Reagan defense planner Lawrence Korb suggest that the military could save $40 billion a year and still maintain its current global posture of being prepared to fight two regional conflicts at once. Moreover, the Pentagon will continue to provide critics with scandals about weapons that don't work, finances that are a mess and contractors that are ripping off taxpayers. The Pentagon will continue to place US soldiers in harm's way in obscure corners of the world, with little understanding or support among the broader public.

With currently projected budget surpluses largely dedicated to paying down the national debt and cutting taxes, discretionary spending remains under a tight lid. The current budget resolution projects declines in domestic discretionary spending but real increases in the military budget. This large and expanding Pentagon budget should logically generate opposition. Environmentalists concerned about sustainable development, global warming and the funding of alternative energy sources in the poor nations of the world find the Pentagon budget an obstacle to their ability to gain the needed funding. Human rights and development groups run into the Pentagon budget. Domestic groups—teachers, parents, advocates of children, the poor, the cities, the disabled—will find a rising military budget a direct threat to their ability to secure investments vital to this society.

A President could make a compelling case to the American people for new priorities, but such leadership is not in the offing. The military-industrial complex that Eisenhower warned against is still powerful and entrenched. A bipartisan Congressional bloc seeks more, not less, military spending. Thus any move to change priorities will have to come from outside Washington. Some efforts are under way to at least begin the debate. Groups like Peace Action have started to put greater emphasis on Pentagon spending. Ben Cohen, the co-founder of Ben and Jerry's ice cream, has gathered more than 600 business executives into a group titled Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, which launched a multiyear campaign to educate citizens about the opportunity to change priorities. Global campaigns for debt relief, disarmament and limitation of arms-trafficking have started to gain some momentum. The remarkable victory of citizens in pushing through a landmine treaty against the initial skepticism of virtually every military and national government shows the potential for independent action.

But as the new century begins, the opportunity posed by the end of the cold war seems to be slipping away. The Clinton Administration has given a bipartisan cast to an international policy grossly skewed toward military engagement. Other priorities—at home and abroad—remain starved of funds, attention and momentum. In 1992 the authors of a Carnegie Endowment report concluded that the end of the cold war was a "rare opportunity"; above all, "a time for us to change the way we think about the world and the way we conduct our affairs at home and abroad." The Clinton Administration has failed to meet that challenge.

The best hope now comes from the global citizen movements that are mobilizing for justice, human rights and the environment against the spread of plagues, poverty and the arms trade. In area after area their calls for action—on sweatshops, debt, the drug trade, landmines and war crimes—are gaining ground. Slowly, they are changing the way we think about the world and forcing the United States to alter the way it operates. They open the way for any "leader" with sense enough to follow. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

is threefold: (1) to insure that Governor Ryan keeps his promises as to the makeup and mandate of the commission; (2) to see that the Governor's commission conducts a fair and comprehensive review of the defects, abuses and costs associated with the use of the death penalty; and (3) to encourage strong public involvement in this process. The time for change is ripe. A statewide poll of Illinois voters conducted shortly after Governor Ryan made his announcement showed that fully 81 percent supported the moratorium.

We invite *Nation* readers to join out-of-state stalwarts like Steve Earle and Mike Farrell in assisting us. Contributions should be made to the Illinois Death Penalty Moratorium Project, 180 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 2300, Chicago, IL 60601, or call (312) 849-2279. BILL RYAN
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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Hawking Vietnam

RICHARD FALK

VIETNAM: THE NECESSARY WAR: A Reinterpretation of America's Most Disastrous Military Conflict.
By Michael Lind.
Free Press. 314 pp. $25.

With the twenty-fifth anniversary of the American withdrawal from Vietnam hard upon us, readers and viewers may well be treated to a multitude of reprises of the arguments surrounding the war and its legacy. Already a chilling interpretation appeared a few months ago, which resonates even more strongly now: Michael Lind has written a wild, dangerous book that pretends to offer a sober, scholarly rethinking of the Vietnam War that is, or should be, of decisive relevance to current issues of war and peace. The perverse tone and substance of Lind's argument is expressed in concentrated form by the following observation: "If American radical leftists, pacifists, and libertarian isolationists prevail in promoting a pacifist political culture in the United States, then it is only a matter of time before the world is dominated by a military superpower whose leaders have an ethos like that of today's Serb leaders." Such a juxtaposition of allegations and anxieties is positively surreal in its remoteness from any plausible understanding of either the United States or global trends.

What makes Lind's book important, and dangerous, is the extent to which it has caused a stir, evoking mainly laudatory reactions from establishment figures such as Dan Rather and Fareed Zakaria (managing editor of *Foreign Affairs*) and favorable reviews in the mainstream media. As a society we remember little of the experience of the Vietnam War and remain vulnerable to an array of twisted interpretations. Lind, too young to remember Vietnam, presents its reality in a most manipulative manner so as to present his highly polemical views about how American power should be used today and tomorrow. By deploying some scholarly apparatus, the outrageous is made to appear reasonable, even sensible.

Central to Lind's perspective is the assertion that the United States "fought the war in Vietnam because of geopolitics and forfeited the war because of domestic politics." Lind contends that the war was "necessary" as a means of assuring America's cold war allies in the sixties that it was a credible ally, and that failure to oppose Hanoi in Vietnam would have led many Third World governments to shift their allegiance to Moscow. In most respects, Lind's justification is one more rendering of notorious domino imagery that linked the outcome in Vietnam to a chain reaction of regional and global effects. In most respects, too, but with greater subtlety and flexibility, Lind's argument was fully formulated by Leslie Gelb (now, appropriately, president of the Council on Foreign Relations) and Richard Betts in their book *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked*, published more than twenty years ago. Mercifully, Gelb and Betts understood far better than Lind that it would be dangerous to draw from Vietnam doctrinal lessons about when and in what manner to engage the United States in a war, although they too accept as reasonable the geopolitical rationale for the early stages of the Vietnam War.

In this view, a form of geopolitical extremism, Vietnam was a necessary war to engage in but not a necessary war to win.

The distinctiveness of Lind's position is his acceptance, even in retrospect, that the politicians were right both to fight the war and then, in the late sixties, to try to end it. In fact, Lind faults Nixon for not ending the war sooner and disagrees with militarists who contended, and still do, that once a decision to intervene had been made, then victory was the only acceptable outcome regardless of costs and risks. Lind argues

Richard Falk is the author, among other works, of Explorations at the Edge of Time: The Prospects for World Order *(Temple).*

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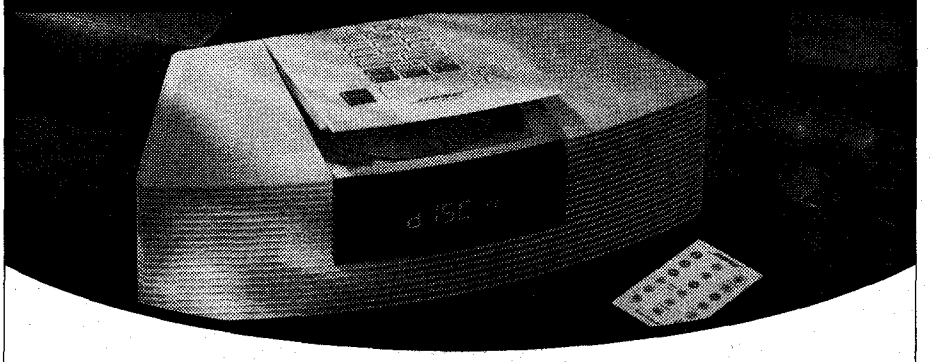

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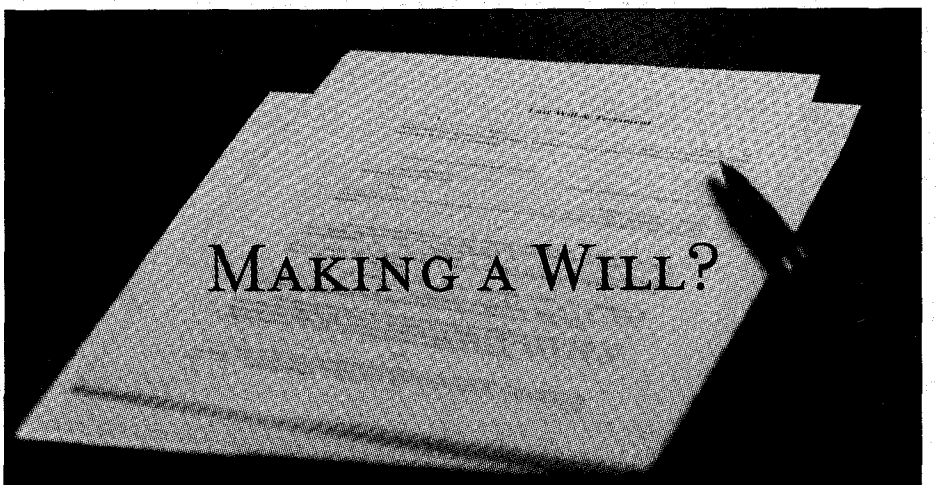

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against such a militaristic argument not because of its international risks or immorality but, typically, because it would have undermined domestic support for the global containment strategy central to US cold war foreign policy. In effect, Vietnam was a necessary war, but it was not necessary to win it. Astonishingly, at a certain stage it became necessary to give up, and lose it!

With a stunning degree of detachment, going beyond even the heartless abstractions of Kissingerian realism, Lind unabashedly rests his case directly on bloodshed and body counts. The Vietnam War was worth as much as 20,000 American lives, not much more or much less. As such, in the early stages of the war US leadership was pursuing a correct foreign policy essential for alliance credibility, but in the late sixties and early seventies it went too far, risking the cold war consensus as the casualty figures climbed up toward their final total of close to 58,000.

To give the flavor of the argument, I can do no better than to quote Lind:

> A war to defend a great power's military credibility might be compared to an art auction, which is, among other things, a competition among the rich for prestige. The fact that one stops bidding for a painting when its price reaches $9000 does not mean that the painting was worthless all along; it merely means that one has reached the limit imposed by one's budget.

Aside from the appallingly bad taste exhibited here, the approach recommended would provoke even harsher backlash against a foreign policy that was seen to be sacrificing the lives of young Americans for the sake of such a dubious abstraction.

Lind realizes part of the absurdity (and depravity) of his position, but he perseveres: "To send troops to their deaths purely for the purpose of reputation, in a war that could not be won by any plausible means, would be murder." He proceeds to square this circle by claiming that "even a well-thought-out and realistic effort to rescue America's Indochinese allies should have been called off, once a critical level of American casualties had been reached." One can only imagine what such an attitude toward conflict would do to the tactics of a determined adversary! It is almost amusing that Lind's bow to morality requires him to rely on the misperception of difficulties on the part of policy-makers and their advisers. That is, if it had been understood from the beginning that the war in Vietnam could not be won without American deaths reaching beyond the Lind

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threshold of 20,000, then to undertake the war would be "murder." But to do so in the spirit of misguided optimism was not only moral, it was geopolitically necessary!

The framing of this argument is most deeply disturbing because of its inhumanity. What never even marginally enters into Lind's calculating mentality is the cost of such a war for the Vietnamese people or the degree to which their struggle was itself just within its parameters. While America was enduring the tragedy of 58,000 war-related deaths, Vietnam was enduring an estimated 3.8 million deaths, as well as millions more wounded, and the displacement of a large proportion of its surviving population. The people of Vietnam also experienced the devastation that resulted from a one-sided high-technology war being waged against their country for more than a decade. Lind aborts the complexities of historical analysis by demonizing Ho Chi Minh and the nationalist cause, which was more central to the struggle than either ideology or geopolitics. He doesn't even bother to distinguish Vietnam from Korea or to take note of the leadership Ho Chi Minh had provided Vietnam in its anticolonial war against France and the degree to which US allies in Saigon were mainly the Vietnamese remnants of collaboration with the colonialists. Even now, it may not be too late for Lind to benefit from a reading of Graham Greene's great, prophetic book *The Quiet American*.

It strikes me as a badge of honor that Lind singles out *The Nation* several times in his book as personifying the left, pacifist culture that would doom the sort of geopolitical practices that he is commending. There are many confusions and mistakes in Lind's reasoning, aside from the conclusions drawn with respect to the Vietnam War. Only a very small fraction of the *Nation* readership is "pacifist" in the sense of being unconditionally opposed to all war. Any careful reading of the magazine or examination of the wider debates on foreign policy in the past decade would take note of the deep divisions associated with the use of force by the United States, with or without a UN mandate. And further back, I would suppose an overwhelming majority of readers supported US participation in World War II and, indeed, even entry into the war prior to Pearl Harbor. If Lind means that criticism of geopolitics—fighting wars for global credibility—is a species of pacifism, it is a strange use of language indeed, as well as a strange doctrine.

Lind's view of the recent war over Kosovo is emblematic. He views the war as subject to the legacy of Vietnam, and he criticizes the approach taken by the Clinton Administration because it neither gave the war its true geopolitical justification (that of demonstrating American leadership in the present global setting) nor adjusted its tactics to the nature of the conflict. In a striking sentence that, unlike most of the rest of the book, offers an important insight, Lind writes, "President Clinton, in what may be the single greatest act of incompetence ever committed by an American commander-in-chief, publicly ruled out the use of ground troops not once but repeatedly." Yet to view the war over Kosovo through a geopolitical prism in light of Serbian atrocities and an unambiguous plan for ethnic cleansing (under way before the bombing commenced) is to distort the debate beyond repair. I am by now inclined to think that the Kosovo war was a "necessary war" (although not a just war as conducted from the air, especially from high altitudes), but its necessity as a war (assuming the unavailability of a diplomatic solution) is justifiable only if undertaken for humanitarian reasons—that is, to rescue an entrapped and abused ethnic community from severe oppression and genocidal dangers. In Lind's geopolitical conception, the NATO war remains illegal, unjust and, hence, criminal.

Lind's position stakes out new ideological ground: It relies on geopolitical extremism to occupy a political terrain self-consciously associated with the political center. Early in the book he informs us that he views the Vietnam War from "a centrist perspective more sympathetic to American Cold War policymakers than that of their critics on the left and the right." But even such a primary architect of the Vietnam War as Robert McNamara now views the entire experience as "a tragedy" for both sides. The only sensible lesson he is willing to draw is to do all that is possible to avoid a future Vietnam. How different is this former warrior's message from Lind's shrill insistence that the United States should proudly gird its militarist loins for future Vietnams! Rarely, if ever before, has the political center in the United States been so frighteningly depicted as a menace to the peoples of the world. By linking Vietnam to Kosovo through the currency of credibility, Lind makes clear that this menace persists beyond the end of the cold war. Now Washington must kill and maim to sustain its hegemonic authority rather than to contain a strategic adversary, which is hardly an uplifting role to foist upon the Pentagon. ■

Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?

LAWRENCE JOSEPH

BLONDE. By Joyce Carol Oates. HarperCollins/Ecco. 738 pp. $27.50.

In *Moby-Dick*, in the chapter "The Fossil Whale," Ishmael proclaims: "To produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme." The theme of Joyce Carol Oates's *Blonde*—well, it's about as mighty as you can get. In an Author's Note, Oates characterizes the book as "a radically distilled 'life'"—the life of Norma Jean Baker, *a k a* Marilyn Monroe—"in the form of fiction." But *Blonde* is no more a book about the life of Norma Jean Baker or Marilyn Monroe than *Moby-Dick* is—a novel? an epic? a fable? a high-seas adventure tale? a single sustained metaphor charged with meaning?—about a whale. A mighty book? I'll say. *Blonde* is one mighty, tremendous book.

A multitude of possible readings—where does one begin? Perhaps by asking how one writes fiction about a historical person who's been imagined at every level of our culture? Oates warns us not to look in *Blonde* for biographical facts. Yes, she has consulted a number of biographical works. But *Blonde* isn't intended as a historical document. Nor is Oates writing (as Graham McCann did in *Marilyn Monroe* or Norman Mailer in *Marilyn*) a subjective account of Marilyn Monroe as a mythic figure. *Blonde* is fiction, yet Oates isn't completely free to invent Norma Jean Baker/Marilyn Monroe any more than Don DeLillo was free to create Lee Harvey Oswald in *Libra*.

Lawrence Joseph is the author of Lawyerland *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux) and three collections of poetry, most recently* Before Our Eyes *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux).*

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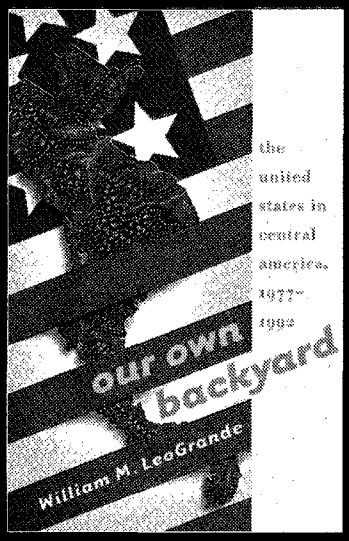

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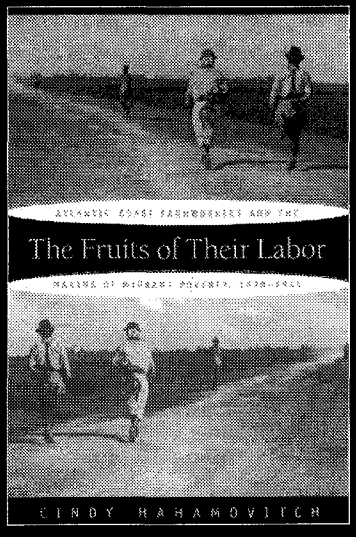

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One thing: The mere ambition demands a book of epic proportions. After a "Prologue: 3 August 1962," *Blonde* plays out in five substantial sections, each corresponding to a period of time: Part I, "The Child 1932–1938"; Part II, "The Girl 1942–1947"; Part III, "The Woman 1949–1953"; Part IV, "'Marilyn' 1953–1958"; Part V, "The Afterlife 1959–1963." Yet, Oates reminds us, for all its length, the principle of appropriation employed here is synecdoche. Details are not used to provide facts but, instead, constitute the essence—the very being—of her subject.

How does Oates form the essence of this child, this girl, this woman Norma Jean Baker/Marilyn Monroe? Through the voice of NJ/MM herself. In *Blonde* Oates creates character and plot through one of the most complex vocal compositions in American fiction. NJ/MM's voice is, first of all, that of an omniscient narrator, speaking from outside of time. The omniscient voice is constantly changing tense and person, however, adopting the voice of other characters and observers, at times assuming an almost documentary quality similar to a movie voiceover. Yet NJ/MM's voice is also intensely internalized—an inner voice at once intimate, sensual and ecstatic. Because the omniscient voice is also an inner voice, the reader never quite knows if what is being said can be objectively determined. But due to the force of the narration, we don't really care. What some critics have found problematic—how Oates's NJ/MM corresponds with our own knowledge and sense of her—really isn't. The voice of Norma Jeane (Oates adds the "e") is so compelling we're immediately transported into the mystery, into the being, of *this* individual personality.

A voice above all—yet in Oates's portrait of Norma Jeane/Marilyn, the voice of an artist. One of the deepest metaphors in *Blonde* is the art of acting. As Henry James said: "To live *in* the world of creation—to get into it and stay in it—to frequent it and haunt it—to *think* intensely and fruitfully—to woo combinations and inspirations into being by a depth and continuity of attention and meditation—this is the only thing." This living in the world of creation is, in *Blonde*, who Norma Jeane Baker/ Marilyn Monroe most profoundly is. The "Prologue: 3 August 1962" begins, "There came death…" August 5, 1962, we know, is the day that Marilyn Monroe died. The movement toward her death is what projects *Blonde*'s plot. But there are also two ontological visions simultaneously being plotted in *Blonde*. There is the *is*-ness of the omniscient inner-narrative voice, an expression of the essence of its speaker. Then there is the *is*-ness that Octavio Paz in his essay "The Other Voice" refers to as the "psychic disorder" of the creative self. One pole of this disorder, Paz says, is a "mania…a sacred fury, an enthusiasm, a transport"; the other, an "*absentia*," an "inner emptiness." Combined, we have "fullness and emptiness, flight and fall, enthusiasm and melancholy: poetry." Oates in *Blonde* suggests that this disorder—this passion—is in each one of us. Marilyn's Monroe's "life"—as well as what we make of it—may just tell us something about who we are.

Character and plot composed through innumerable manifestations of voice—for example, Norma Jeane's "earliest memory, so exciting! Grauman's Egyptian Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard. This was years before she'd been able to comprehend even the rudiments of a movie story, yet she was enthralled by the movement, the ceaseless rippling fluid movement, on the great screen above her."

Norma Jeane on her sixth birthday, June 1, 1932, with Gladys—"Mother"—young and beautiful, who works at a menial job at The Studio. But there is no Father—who is Norma Jeane's father? Norma Jeane, who loved to be read to by Gladys because it meant more calm, not "sudden bursts of laughter, or cursing, or tears"; Gladys reading to her from *The Little Treasury of American Verse*, a poem of Emily Dickinson's: "Because I could not stop for Death,/He kindly stopped for me;/The Carriage held but just Ourselves/And Immortality." So, too, Norma Jeane her whole life secretly will name her own characters in the poems she writes, in her tragic—or is it comic?—play, her own invented movie script: Father, Mother, Fair Princess, Dark Prince, Baby, Magic Friend, Rumpelstiltskin, Rin Tin Tin, The Sharpshooter, the Ex-Athlete, the Playwright, Beggar Maid, the President. Mystery. Death.

In the City of Sand, Los Angeles—"built on sand and it *is* sand. It's a desert," Gladys tells her. During the fire season, autumn 1934, Gladys mentally disintegrates (she will be put into a state psychiatric hospital), a "crying sniveling child beside her," an 8-year-old with a stammer. There is no one to take care of her after her grandmother dies, so she is placed into the custody of the state. Norma Jeane—"I am so ashamed, nobody wants me, I want to die"—a girl of 12, boys and men sexually aroused by her ("Look at the ass on that one, the little blonde!"), hearing, yet blushing and indignantly not-hearing, taught Christian Science by the director of the orphanage ("That God is

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Mind, and Mind is all, and mere 'matter' does not exist"), self-consciously ashamed of her body, startled by her first menses, the heavy flow of her blood. Norma Jeane, 15, living in the foster home of Elsie and Warren Pirig, writing poems and prayers, her sexuality driving men crazy, involved—to what extent?—with several (some of them married), unsuccessfully trying out for the cheerleading team, the Van Nuys high school play (Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*), the girls' choir. Married at 16 ("Where was the bride's mother?") to Bucky Glazer, five years older than she is, an embalmer's assistant who also works the night shift at Lockheed Aviation. Norma Jeane is "sexy like Rita Hayworth. But a girl you'd want to marry like Jeanette MacDonald." For Norma Jeane: "The fundamental truth of my life whether in fact it was truth or a burlesque of truth: when a man wants you, you're safe." Only a year later: "She's sucking me dry. She's driving me away.... *And the weird thing is, I don't think she feels much, in her actual body. The way a woman is supposed to feel.*" Then the day that Bucky informs her that he's enlisted in the merchant marine: "No, Daddy! You can't leave me. I'll die if you leave me"—Norma Jeane clutching at him, moaning, her breasts pressed against his sweaty chest, trying to straddle him, smacking her thighs against him, coiled tense and quivering. "Stop it!" he shouted into her face, "Stop it! You sad, sick cow."

Eighteen now, living by herself, working in an aircraft factory—"She was *a working girl* now"—loading airplane fuselages with liquid plastic. Pain and fever and severe menstrual cramps. "Now there was no one who loved her. Now she was on her own," 20 years old, divorced (which she mentions to her mother—diagnosed "acute chronic paranoid schizophrenia with probably alcoholic and drug-induced neurological impairment"—on one of her frequent visits to the state hospital). Discovered by a photographer, "*as if whoever held that camera was her closest friend. Or maybe it was the camera that was her closest friend*," and made into a Pinup. A Preene model and a contract player at The Studio. "The truth was, her life was hard work, anxious work." At an acting class she's laughed at: "*Your insides don't match your outside. You're a freak.*" A meeting arranged by her agent with the head of The Studio, Mr. Z. "*Who's that blonde looking like a tramp* one of my so-called friends reported to me Mr. Z had said of me." "Mr. Z pushing her toward a white fur rug saying, *Get down Blondie*—and "the hurt of the Thing of hard rubber,

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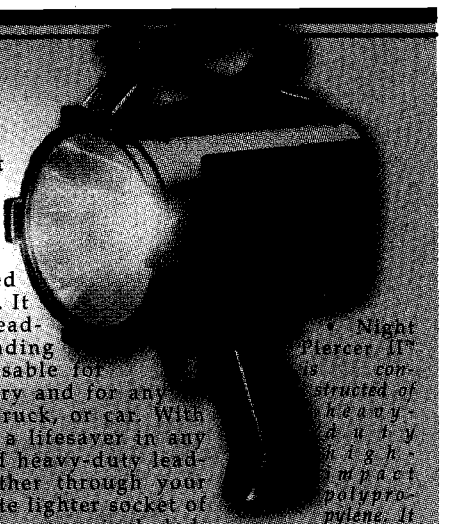

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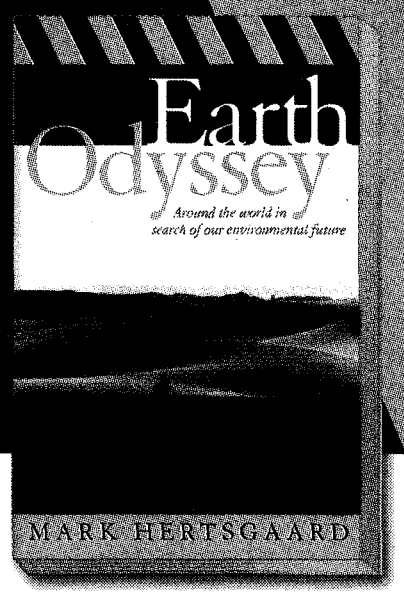

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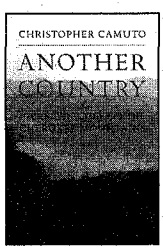

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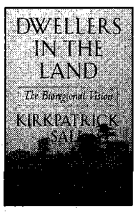

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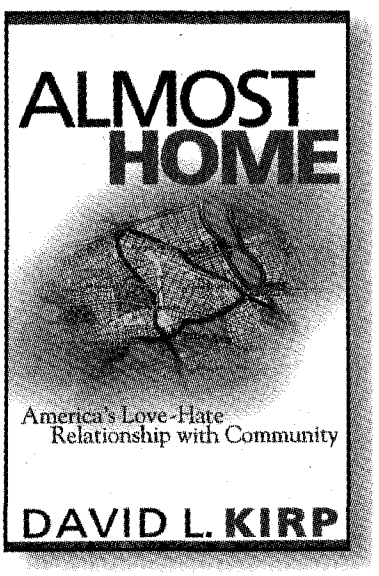

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America s Love-Hate Relationship with Community

David L. Kirp

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Kirp is a regular contributer to *The Nation* and *The New York Times*. Some of the stories in *Almost Home* originally appeared in national magazines, including *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper s*.

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I think greased & knobby at the end shoved first between the cracks of my buttocks & then up inside me like a beak plunging in." "Inside my clothes I was bleeding." Later that day, she's told she'll be cast in the movie. She will need a new name. "I am twenty-one years old & I am MARILYN MONROE." "Later that day the start of my NEW LIFE."

She is MARILYN MONROE when she falls madly in love with her Gemini twin Cass C (the son of Charlie Chaplin). She is Angela in *The Asphalt Jungle*. Who's the blonde? "Who's the blonde? The blonde is my client, 'Marilyn Monroe,'" says her agent. "M-marilyn is only a career. She hasn't any 'well-being,'" Norma Jeane answers him. Under the name Gladys Pirig, she is a student in a Renaissance-poetry class at UCLA in 1951, reading George Herbert's poem "The Altar" out loud to the class. "Most Promising Starlet 1951." In '52, the role of Nell in *Don't Bother to Knock*. The release of photographs taken by the Marxist photographer Otto Ose in 1949: "The nude photos of Norma Jeane Baker, a/k/a 'Marilyn Monroe' he'd taken that day would become the most famous, or infamous, calendar nudes in history. For which the model would earn fifty dollars and millions of dollars would be earned by others. By men." "Miss Golden Dreams"—dropped from The Studio. Who tries killing herself. The role of Rose in *Niagara* is what saves her. She is famous. Lover now both to Cass C and Eddy G (the son of Edward G. Robinson)—Cass C and Eddy G are lovers, too. Pregnant by one of them (which one, she doesn't know). At the party following the *Niagara* premiere, confronting Mr. Z, in Rose's mocking undertone: "Do you remember that day in September 1947? I was just a girl. I was so scared! I hadn't yet been given my Studio name. Do you remember hurting me, Mr. Z? Do you remember making me bleed, Mr. Z?... Years ago. And then you dropped my contract, Mr. Z. Do you remember?"

Mother's health is deteriorating. She worries about Baby. She is the talk of the media. Rumors she's had sex with hundreds of men. Rumors she's a Benzedrine junkie. She meets the Ex-Athlete, who asked to meet her. The day that she looks for a place to live for Baby and her with Cass C and Eddy G, Cass C nearly dead from a drug overdose—"she knew what she would do." The role of Lorelei Lee in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* ("*For this you killed your baby*"). She begins to receive letters signed "Father." "*I can't fail. If I fail I must die.* This had been Marilyn's secret no one

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knew. After the Operation. After Baby was taken from her. Her punishment was throbbing uterine pain." Prescribed codeine (for "real or imagined pain"), Benzedrine (for "quick energy"), Nembutal (for "deep dreamless" and "conscienceless" sleep). In January '54, she and the Ex-Athlete marry (in October '54 they're divorced). They visit Japan, the eerie chanting outside their hotel window for Marilyn: *Mon-chan! Mon-chan! Mon-chan!* "The American Goddess of Love on the Subway Grating, New York City 1954," a "lush-bodied girl in the prime of her physical beauty. In an ivory georgette crepe sundress with a halter top that gathers her breasts up in soft undulating folds of the fabric. She's standing with bare legs apart on a New York subway grating." "Whore! Are you proud? Showing your crotch like that, on the street! My wife!"—the Ex-Athlete, insane with rage, hits her.

Summer 1955, after the divorce, she tries to drown herself. She leaves Los Angeles to live in New York City. She meets the Playwright at the New York Ensemble of Theatre Artists. "*Of course, I love you,*" he says. "*I'd like to save you from yourself, is all.*" He would "*rewrite the story of both our lives. Not tragic but American epic!*" A decade later, still grieving, he would write: "*The intersection between private pathology and the insatiable appetite of a capitalist-consumer culture. How can we understand this mystery? This obscenity?*" She is Cherie, 1956, in *Bus Stop*. "What was happening in Arizona on the Bus Stop location, what had happened in Los Angeles, what she could not tell her lover was a strangeness too elusive to be named." She is pregnant and she miscarries. She is Sugar Kane in *Some Like It Hot*, 1959, in 1961 Roslyn in *The Misfits*. A quotation from Pascal is written in her notebook: "Our nature consists in motion; complete rest is death.... The charm of fame is so great that we revere every object to which it is attached, even death." She watches a Marilyn Monroe look-alike onstage at the Club Zuma. "*Darling*," the Playwright still calls her—"Hadn't she killed this man's love for her by now?" The remaining scenes include: "Divorce (Retake)"; "My House. My Journey"; "The President's Pimp"; "The Prince and the Beggar Maid"; "The President and the Blond Actress: The Rendezvous" (Whitey, her makeup man and most loyal friend: "*Miss Monroe what has happened to you since your trip...in April, oh what has happened?*"); "Happy Birthday, Mr. President"; "Special Delivery 3 August 1962." The book concludes—a fatal injection of liquid Nembutal by The Sharpshooter sinking "the six-inch needle to the hilt into her heart"?—with a chapter titled "We Are All Gone Into the World of Light."

Seven hundred and thirty-eight pages, textured with cultural, psychical and aesthetic meaning. A critical commentary cannot begin to touch the experience of reading a book of *Blonde*'s magnitude. In these pages in 1990 Henry Louis Gates Jr., in a review of Oates's novel *Because It Is Bitter, and Because It Is My Heart*, noted that in the late sixties (shortly after her novel *them*) Oates confessed to the ambition of putting the whole world in her fiction, an ambition she termed "laughably Balzacian." "It may have seemed so to her," Gates went on, "but no one is laughing now." Since then, Oates has written *Black Water*, *Foxfire: Confessions of a Girl Gang*, *What I Lived For*, *Zombie*, *We Were the Mulvaneys*, *Man Crazy*, *My Heart Laid Bare*, *Broke Heart Blues* and *Blonde*. Oates has become most like William Faulkner. Every novel is a newly invented form of language, a deepening vision of America. No writer today has (paraphrasing what Saul Bellow once told Martin Amis) delved into the mysterious circumstances of being alive at this time in America—explored our entire social strata—to the extent that she has. Oates is 61. She is perennially mentioned for the Nobel Prize. *Blonde*, one hopes, will be the book that will convince the Swedish academy not to make the same mistake with her that it did with Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Graham Greene. ■

ART

Art of the Free and Brave

ARTHUR C. DANTO

WHITNEY BIENNIAL 2000

A woman I know once agreed to take a young Asian child to visit a school in New York, to which her distant parents considered sending her. The visitors were shown a chapel, no longer greatly used for devotional purposes, but deemed a sight worth seeing. The child was shaken by a picture of Jesus, bleeding and nailed to the cross. "What have they done to that poor man?" she asked, in pained incredulity. I somehow thought of her response to what is after all a standard image in the Western artistic canon when I saw a sign that the Whitney Museum has placed at the admissions desk to Biennial 2000: "Sections of the exhibition present artwork or other material that may not be appropriate for some viewers, including children." Nothing on view could possibly have the impact on a sensitive child of a routine depiction of Christ's unimaginable agony. Such a warning sign might far more suitably be placed outside any of the West's great museums, where images of cruelty and torment are found on every corner. People lined up to buy cappuccino and biscotti at one of the Metropolitan Museum's convenient coffee bars wait patiently beneath the altogether inappropriate sculpture by Carpeaux of Dante's Ugolino, devouring his children. Imagine if it were learned that the Whitney was showing a statue of a guy eating his kids!

The fact that the museum regards it as necessary or prudent to post warnings at the threshold of a playful and largely friendly display of contemporary art is an emblem of how fearful of the art of our time we have been made by the forces of artistic repression in our society. It is for just this reason that I find it difficult to be especially upset by Hans Haacke's widely deplored installation, *Sanitation*, in which declarations by various politicians, hostile to contemporary art, are lettered on the wall. The lettering, as the media have made it impossible for anyone not to know, is in the spiky Fraktur in which the Third Reich posted its own proclamations. Though as a result Haacke has been charged by some with "trivializing the Holocaust," it cannot be denied how central a role artistic suppression has played in all the totalitarian movements of the twentieth century. "Hans always goes too far!" someone said—but the presence of the little warning sign at the threshold of the show is internally related to the messages in and of Haacke's work. There is no internal connection, on the other hand, between any other work I can think of in the show and the warning on the sign, which can only be interpreted as a gesture of deference to the politicians Haacke has quoted.

I wished that there were somehow an

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internal connection between the sign and the witty work *Banner Yet Wave*, which the Whitney commissioned from Kay Rosen, in lieu of a banner on its facade. It refers to a banner, and indeed to the only banner with an identity in common American consciousness—the Star Spangled Banner, about which, at the beginnings of baseball games, sopranos always ask whether it yet waves o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave. Jasper Johns's celebrated triptlet of American flags, which the museum used as a logo for its exhibition "The American Century," perhaps deserves a rest. It appears in two of the works on view—one of them an ant farm by Yukinori Yanagi ("Blurring the distinction between art and entomology," the solemn catalogue might say), the other *Sanitation* itself (in which the smallest of the superposed flags has a turned-down corner, like a napkin). Rosen selected certain letters from the phrase "banner yet wave" and distributed them, white on red rectangles, across the stepped tiers of the building's facade, as if notes on musical staves. A alone on the top stave, A NER on the next one down, BA YE below that, ET WA below that and AVE at the bottom, to the sign's right. Sign, *Sanitation* and *Banner Yet Wave* constitute an unintended political installation—and we may as well enlist the free, brave artists of the rest of the show as a fourth component, collectively answering Yes! to the anthem's question.

A fifth component might be required to give us a full picture of the state of our art, namely the way the Biennial is represented in the media. Modern art has made good copy since the Armory Show of 1913 handed reporters an irresistible opportunity to crack up their readership—or to appall it—with the antics of artistic nutcakes. Biennial 2000 is not an American "Sensation," and one almost felt sorry for the disconsolate cameramen prowling the press opening in unrewarded pursuit of visual scandals to spice up the evening news. Haacke's piece was hardly more sensational in content than the editorial pages of most newspapers when they deplored Mayor Giuliani's attack on the Brooklyn Museum. Lisa Yuskavage, who paints young women meditating upon their own swelling bodies, provided perhaps the nearest thing to a piquant image with a woman in profile, showing part of a bare breast. Cynics might wonder whether the selection committee might not have gone out of its way to render its warning empty—but in fact Biennial 2000 comes closer than any of its recent predecessors in showing the way the art world of its moment really

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is. Artists today are an especially serious group of what one ought properly to think of as visual thinkers. Probably even the artists of "Sensation" were bent less on shocking the populace than in pleasing the owner/collector Charles Saatchi. When a reporter asked Chakaia Booker, a handsome black woman in an elaborate headdress, standing proudly in front of her work, whether it bothered her that Hans Haacke had taken all the attention away from the other artists, she replied that she did not think that Haacke had. Her work is an immense and imposing wall-piece of worn and twisted rubber tires, artfully arranged. Why had he not asked her to explain the work, and especially the relation to it of its title, *Homage to Thy Mother (Landscape)*? Is it a landscape of devastation and ruin, which, even so, the artist has managed to make into something intricate and powerful, swept by pulsing rhythms and graceful arabesques? Hence an allegory of art's transformative powers?

If one looks at the art through the clarifying lens of the ample wall texts—or listens through the headsets the museum distributes free of charge, to what the artists themselves have to say about their own work—the evidence is overwhelming that most of the art has a certain high moral and intellectual purpose. The artists portray themselves as engaged in conceptual exploration, calling boundaries into question, seeking to bring to consciousness the way we think about many things. It is as if the works exist on two levels—the level of object and the level of argument, and the wall texts—or catalogue entries—assist us in grasping what the work is through explaining what the object means. Often the distance between object and argument is so wide that without the text we would badly misread the object. This is not that different from traditional art as one might suppose. Think, for example, of how little a realistic seventeenth-century crucifixion tells us about the meaning of the object it shows or why it is appropriately hung in chapels. Who would know—who really could understand by means of visual perception alone—that the twisted figure is redeeming through physical suffering the taint of original sin humanity until then allegedly carried? The meaning of much of the work is at just such a level of abstractness, relative to the object intended as its vehicle. In this respect, contemporary and traditional art have a great deal more in common with each other than either has with Modernist art, which sought to convey its meaning by visual means alone—so much so that with such work as Matisse's or Cézanne's, the very presence of wall texts was considered supererogatory. The difference between traditional and contemporary art is that with the former, a certain common culture enabled viewers to know the arguments under which objects were intended to be seen, whereas this cannot be counted on in connection with what artists do today. So without the explanation we have no way of knowing what we are looking at.

Sometimes, it must be admitted, the object is stronger than the work. I greatly admired, for example, a painting by Ingrid Calame, in reddish-pink enamel on a very large mylar sheet, cascading down the wall and then spreading out onto the floor. The forms themselves have the look of spilled and splashed pigment, impulsively swept onto the surface with brooms or wide brushes, in an Abstract Expressionist manner. This proves to be an illusion. The forms derive from tracings of "the lacy stains left by the evaporation of nameless liquids" which the artist found on Los Angeles streets. She has compiled an archive of these, noting the location of each stain and the date on which it was found. The forms are the result of careful transcription, rather than of impulsive expressive brushwork—and monumentalize pre-existing splotches. So we have to rethink our response to the object, which turns out to

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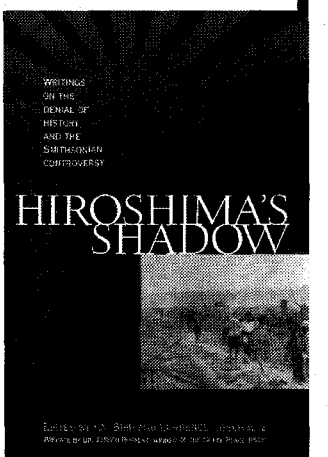

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be far more intellectual and calculated than emotional and impulsive.

A comparable distance separates object from argument in Ghada Amer's *Untitled (John Rose)*. Her paintings look, the catalogue concedes, "like finely drawn, delicate abstractions." The informed eye leads one to surmise that her work shows the influence of Cy Twombly. But as with Calame's work, the eye is a very poor guide to what we in fact see. First, the lines are not drawn or painted but sewn. Second, the forms are not abstract but derived from images of women in pornographic magazines. One can, once instructed, see that these are stitchings, but I found it as difficult to make out that I was looking at "sexually suggestive postures" as I did to identify as female body parts—cut from the same genre of magazines—the things with which the Holy Virgin Mary is surrounded in Chris Ofili's controversial painting from the Brooklyn "Sensation" show. In any case, Amer is making, by means of stitched prurient imagery, some statement about the representation of women. One would not know this without help. Aesthetics is almost consistently subverted in much of today's art—especially when aesthetics seems initially to be the point of what we are looking at. That subversion is in the service of the larger moral meanings that the works are designed—with the help of explanation—to convey.

Sometimes explanation in fact intensifies the experience of the object. Consider a remarkable work by Paul Pfeiffer—a tiny (3-by-4 inch) video, set into a wall. At first glance it shows a black athlete, standing alone on a stadium floor, distantly surrounded by crowds of spectators. The athlete's fists are held in front of him, and his head is bent back in what appears to be a shout, perhaps of victory. The film is a very short loop: The athlete endlessly advances, retreats, advances, retreats, advances, retreats. One could let it go at that, until one notices the title: *Fragment of a Crucifixion (After Francis Bacon)*—and one begins to wonder what they have done to that poor man. The artist began with a short clip from a video, showing an episode from a sporting event. He has modified this through digitalization, transforming it into something enough like a painting by Bacon to convert the shout into a scream. The whole scene becomes something resembling the lonely space of a Roman arena, in which someone has suffered or is undergoing suffering, for the entertainment of the prurient crowd. The endlessly repeated movement of the figure has the quality of a fantasy or a trauma, from which the mind cannot break free, enacting, over and over, the same charged happening. The work, repetitive and obsessive, has some of the qualities of the mental state it represents. And it is very successful in using technologies that may hardly have existed when the last Biennial took place—digitalization, DVD players—to present us with an image of which traditional art would have been incapable. It draws on art-historical images and historical imagination, and effects a metaphorical transformation of what in its own right is a fairly banal image from contemporary culture.

There is a lot of video in the Biennial, some of it more successful than others but all of it requiring an investment of real time on the viewer's part with no real guarantee that there will be an artistic payoff comparable to that in Pfeiffer's piece. No such reservation is in order with Shirin Neshat's powerful video installation, *Fervor*, which lasts for eleven intense minutes. Many readers who expressed regret at not having been able to see her earlier masterpiece, *Rapture*, will be able to experience it at P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City until mid-June, where it has a room to itself in the exhibition "Greater New York." *Rapture* is enacted on two facing screens, respectively occupied by women wearing chadors and by men wearing neat white shirts and black pants. The two groups are engaged in parallel symbolic actions. There are again two screens in *Fervor*, this time set side by side. No individual stood out in *Rapture*—it was as if there were two choruses, as in a very ancient dramatic form, segregated by gender. In *Fervor*, two individuals—a Woman and a Man—stand out as characters. Unlike the other men, the Man stands out by the fact that he wears a suit. The Woman is in a chador, like the others. We first see Man and Woman approaching and passing each other on a rocky road. Each is clearly mindful of the Other. They soon join a crowd, to enter a place of assembly, in which the genders are separated by a black cloth partition. The groups are addressed by a man who appears to discourse on a somewhat primitive painting in the style of a Persian miniature, showing a prince with a falcon on his wrist and a lady with courtiers. The audience (congregation?) responds with chants—this must be the fervor to which the title refers—but Man and Woman, though they cannot see each other, are more involved with each other's invisible presence than with what the Speaker says. At the same moment, each rises and leaves the building. We finally see them—and they again see each other—outside the building. They still do

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not overcome whatever separates them, though one is left with the hopeful sense that they will. The compelling, urgent music, sung and composed by the same singer as in *Rapture*—Sussan Deyhim—intensifies the feeling of the work, which by itself justifies a visit to the exhibition.

Neshat is one of the few widely known artists in Biennial 2000, as she is in "Greater New York." Both exhibits include a handful of such figures, but for the most part, the artists selected are virtually unknown even to those fairly familiar with the art world today. This somewhat indemnifies the Biennial against the otherwise irrepressible critical complaints about who and what is left out. Both exhibitions are made up primarily of what the organizers of "Greater New York" call "evolving" artists—artists who are doing evolved work without as yet having attained an evolved reputation. P.S. 1, interested in seeing what was being done in the metropolitan area, issued an open call; 2,000 emerging artists submitted work, from which 140 artists were selected. Of course, it is not entirely a fair representation of art in greater New York, simply because the criteria of admission excluded evolved artists. This was not Biennial 2000's policy, but it is its effect. Taken together, the two exhibitions give us a remarkable picture of what is being done in America today. It is astonishing, in view of the sullen suspiciousness toward art of which Hans Haacke's work reminds us, how many artists are out there, engaged in making work of impressive ambition.

I have heard the complaint that Biennial 2000 gives us no sense of the direction of art today; but we might care to distinguish between the direction *of* art and directions *in* art. It is the mark of our moment that the direction of art is simply the aggregate of the directions of individual artists, taken one at a time. This means that most of the ways we thought critically about art in less pluralistic times are of little help today. We are as much on our own as the artists are, so each viewer has to be his or her own critic. I enormously enjoyed Josiah McElheny's *An Historical Anecdote About Fashion*, which is a display of fictional glass. It is fictional in the sense that, though real enough and even brilliant as examples of contemporary glass blowing, it pretends to exemplify a set of objects made in an imaginary Venetian glass factory, executed in homage to Christian Dior's "New Look" of 1947. The work combines art, craft and literature to create a work as philosophically arresting as it is visually stunning. But everything in the show, really, is rewarding if one takes the time to think it through. ■

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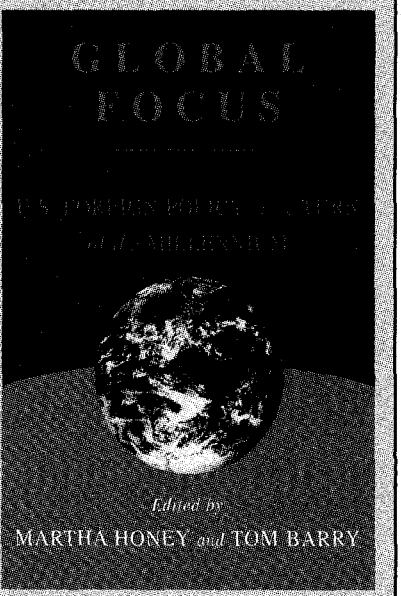

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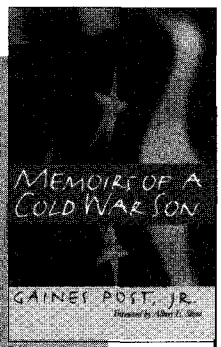

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THE SPECIALIST

Since you presumably know the basics about the Holocaust—if you don't, I would suggest that a movie review is no place to learn them—I will jump to the main question about *The Specialist*, a new documentary that focuses on the trial of Adolf Eichmann. What can we gather from this film that isn't in the books?

The answer lies in the way *The Specialist* was made. It is based exclusively on footage shot at the trial, which began on April 11, 1961, continued through sentencing on December 15 and was videotaped in its entirety. Such comprehensiveness was unusual but not surprising. Having organized an event that was, in the most sober sense of the term, a show trial, the Israeli government made a complete record of what was shown, which was nothing less than the full scope and logistics of the Holocaust.

To carry out the videotaping, the government hired Leo Hurwitz, an American whose professional credentials were impeccable and also distinctly left-wing. (A one-time member of the Film and Photo League, Hurwitz had collaborated on pictures such as *Native Land*.) He placed four concealed cameras in the courtroom and connected them to a control booth, where he could give instructions to the camera operators and edit in real time from the feeds. The result was some 500 hours of videotape—an invaluable historic document, which the Israelis almost immediately abandoned.

Not only were the tapes left to deteriorate in an uncatalogued heap, with the rights to them sold piecemeal—a frequent fate of film and television footage—but the material was eventually made inaccessible. When the young Israeli filmmaker Eyal Sivan learned of the tapes in 1991 and asked to see them, he was informed that this footage didn't exist.

This wasn't a complete lie. When Sivan and writer Rony Brauman at last got their hands on the tapes, they estimated that a third of the footage had decayed so badly that it could no longer be viewed. Even so, I wonder if something beyond mere bureaucratic incompetence was at work in the general disappearance. During these years, the Israeli government had been holding on to another document from the trial: Eichmann's memoirs, an 1,100-page manuscript composed in jail. Knowing that written material can be quoted, misquoted, excerpted, paraphrased, recombined, framed and reframed, the Israelis decided to lock up the manuscript. They did not allow it to emerge until the last of February 2000, as evidence to be used by the historian Deborah Lipstadt against the Holocaust denier David Irving. Given that the Israelis were so cautious with Eichmann's memoirs, I would guess they felt just as uneasy about the uses to which the videotapes might be put. Such materials, too, can be framed and reframed, and with far more force than the written word, since people think of moving images as objective.

But in *The Specialist*, Sivan and Brauman make no pretense of objectivity. They are sophisticated people; as a filmmaker, Sivan has been concerned with the politics of memory and with the Israelis' attempts to write the Palestinians out of history, while Brauman, as a past chair of Médecins Sans Frontières, knows something about the relationship between relief efforts and the news media. The two filmmakers seem to have noticed the irony inherent in the "complete record" of the Eichmann trial, which is not complete at all but rather the semi-rotted remains of whatever Leo Hurwitz selected from whatever could be seen from four distinct viewpoints. It might have been possible to conceal how these materials, with their blind spots and damage, fall short of the implied goal, which is omniscience. Instead, Sivan and Brauman have chosen this very inadequacy as their theme.

On the one hand, in a movement toward greater coherence, they have departed from the sequence of the hearings to construct a chronology of Eichmann's role in the Holocaust. The film takes you fairly smoothly from the 1930s, when Eichmann became a "specialist" in the forced emigration of Jews, to 1945 and the conclusion of his

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work in sending Jews, Gypsies, Poles and other undesirables to the death camps. On the other hand, the filmmakers have worked against this coherence by choosing for our attention everything in the hearings that was flawed and faltering, as if to make us see how a trial, or a history, is formed from a mass of fallibilities.

So here's what you can gather from *The Specialist*: Eichmann wipes clean a pair of eyeglasses and then tries to put them on, forgetting that he is already wearing a pair. While waiting for a translation to come through his headphones, he pulls his mouth leftward in a grimace. Answering a question, he rises and snaps to attention, then sits, rises again to answer, sits, rises again. "How did he look?" the prosecutor asks a witness, who is meant to place Eichmann at the scene of a massacre, only to receive the brusque reply, "He looks better than he ought to." A man in the audience begins to shout and is ejected. A judge expels a puff of air. Another judge, having just watched film footage of Auschwitz, covers his face with his hands. When the lead prosecutor, Gideon Hausner, is rebuked for introducing extraneous evidence, he responds by accusing judge Moshe Landau of not understanding the case. More shouts from the audience; more people ejected. Eichmann, sifting through piles of documents, stands in his glass booth and talks and talks and talks and talks, while different security guards appear and disappear behind him. What was his role at the Wannsee Conference? He merely wrote up the minutes, he says. Hausner, with more anger than forensic sarcasm requires, rounds on him and shouts, "Were you an SS lieutenant colonel or a stenographer?"

"It was German bureaucratic language," Eichmann snaps with a waspishness of his own, when asked at another point about an order he had signed. "'I' doesn't mean Eichmann. I wasn't writing private letters." As if to test this proposition, the filmmakers have his image fade away.

The Specialist is more or less a compilation of such breakdowns and missteps, their indecorum emphasized by a multitude of manipulations of image and sound. (The filmmakers have even placed the ghostly faces of spectators and witnesses—digital "reflections"—on the surface of Eichmann's glass booth.) Were I to make up an overall meaning for these pictures, I would be stepping in it myself. And so I will—because a respect for human mess is something else to be gathered from this film.

Eichmann had no respect for mess. The most efficient of men, he placed all his faith in meaning rather than facts. "Meaning," in his case, was his sworn duty as an officer; "facts," both human and mechanical, were mere instruments to be pushed around. *The Specialist*, in its very materials, resists this impulse to resolve away the particular. It resists the impulse as found in Eichmann himself; and it resists the impulse as expressed in the trial, which was less concerned with judging an individual than with using him for a larger purpose.

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Am I establishing a moral equivalence? God forbid. There is a saving grace to be found in the trial, as Sivan and Brauman show in the remarkable sequence they choose as their climax. Late in the film, the judges, bypassing both the prosecutor and the Hebrew language, are moved to question Eichmann directly, in German. They don't try to make a point; they apparently have nothing to prove. They want to know *him*, the person whose "I" was supposedly irrelevant. How had he managed to go on, if he felt repugnance at his orders, as he claims? Is he testifying to some form of mental reservation? "I don't have to reveal my conscience," he complains; but when pressed, he replies, "It's possible to have a conscious split state."

For a moment, the specialist has become human, to the great interest of the men assigned to judge him. And then, being Eichmann, he blows it. "Remorse," he says, "is for little children."

The Specialist, distributed by Kino International, is on view in New York at Film Forum through April 25.

When Billy Wilder defined alcoholism for the movies in *The Lost Weekend*, a New York drunk was a man who attended the opera, spoke in high-flown phrases and had German Expressionist visions of bats. Now, several decades later, *28 Days* gives us the contemporary definition: a woman who rocks out, blurts one-liners and has fuzzy-video visions of her mom.

Yes, manners have declined. But I'll say this for *28 Days*: The drunk is Sandra Bullock, who's enjoying her first good role in years, and the director is Betty Thomas, who learned long ago at The Second City how to alternate good, vulgar gags with moments of pathos. She and Bullock know how to sell shtick (as when our heroine has to clean the toilet at the rehab center), and they know how to sell emotion (as when Bullock is tempted to reveal herself to the hunky guy in her therapy group).

The strong and varied supporting cast includes Viggo Mortensen (a star baseball pitcher when not bottomed out), Azura Skye (a teenager addicted to heroin and soap operas), the smooth-talking Dominic West (Bullock's boyfriend and enabler), Alan Tudyk (a gay German performance artist, who may have been thrown into the mix as the filmmakers' tribute to Billy Wilder) and, in a stroke of casting genius, Steve Buscemi as the rehab counselor. In a world where Buscemi is the figure of reason, who needs bats? ■

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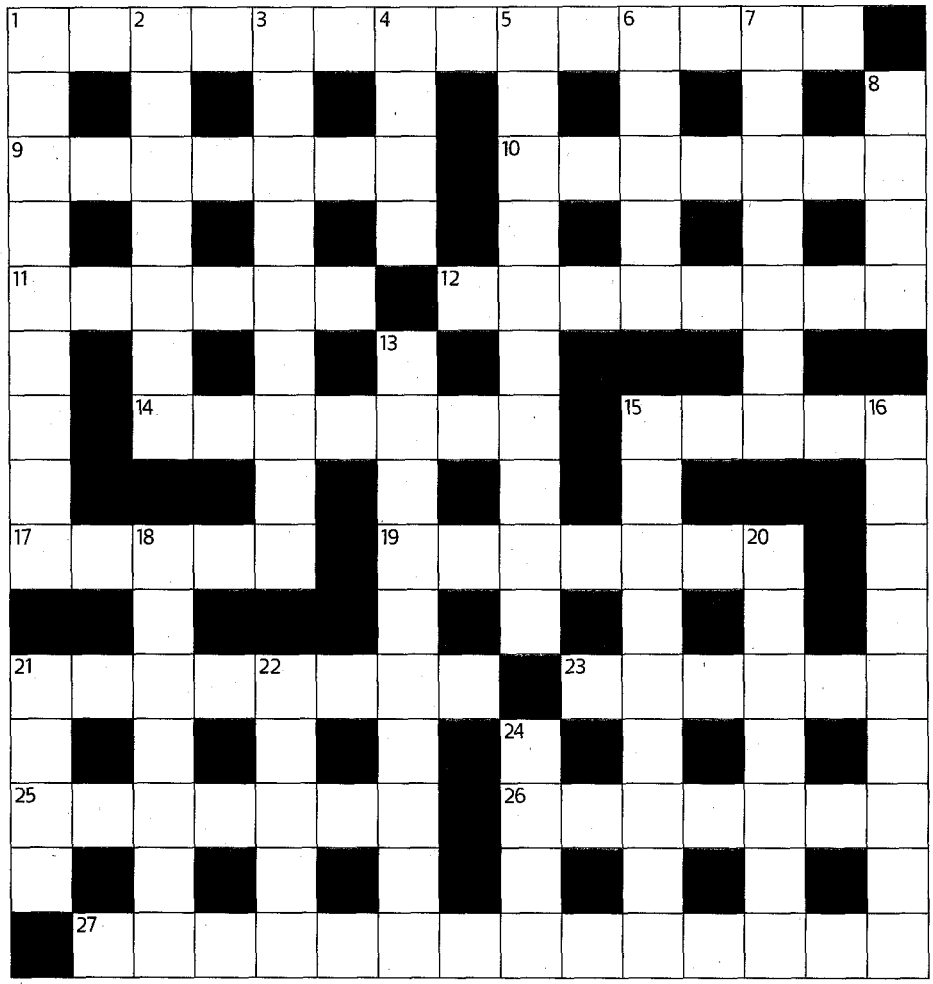

ACROSS

1 Settles accounts with such as owls, being very honest. (6,8)

9 Where they used to find someone acting like one riding shotgun. (2,5)

10 If you had to elect Roosevelt again, would you start out with so dynamic a description? (7)

11 It's a back-formation for a sail, i.e., confused with a way to make a connection. (6)

12 If you get the wrong seat, take a chance, and you still might see one of the 17. (8)

14 A sort of drink that might show up when the chef fixes your over-easies. (3-4)

15 You'll find one in Paris here with the German beneath. (5)

17 What's the point to sailors seeing such as Venus? (5)

19 Raises the spirits since London elevators won't get you down. (7)

21 A marsupial is devilish here where you sat back with a crazy ending. (8)

23 See 8 down

25 Evidently the pilot is really up there with a straight description that should be a winner! (3-4)

26 The lowdown guy passes on carrying your bag—or the makings of your drink. (7)

27 Time to move when those on watch make jumpy motions—but you won't find anything new there. (6-4,4)

DOWN

1 and **21** Ought to, um, end up with punishment—as part of the uniform. (8,5)

2 To hog the limelight sort of puts on years (only possible when 9)! (7)

3 Gives a person a new job, concerning a foolish person getting to sing badly! (9)

4 Killed a large number, evidently. (4)

5 Through getting to eat a little bit at work? If you do, too much! (10)

6 At a different spot the way the ether might appear? (5)

7 Bound up again—that's about right, in short, the way one made a second attempt! (7)

8 and **23** across The one in *Alice* didn't actually end up in the soup, to imitate what the accident-prone turns! (4,6)

13 I took off after the meal and showed a lot of improvement! (10)

15 Evidently no one gave a lot of money to such an establishment, though such statements haven't a grain of truth! (9)

16 They didn't win—possibly because the sled was turned over. (7-2)

18 Would our country be wrong to pine, for example, for the grave? (7)

20 One from Glasgow losing a hundred, commonly, would undoubtedly be so drunk! (7)

21 See 1 down

22 Ferdinand so-called by his companions, a number of years ago in song? (5)

24 Official records of a cat, possibly. (4)

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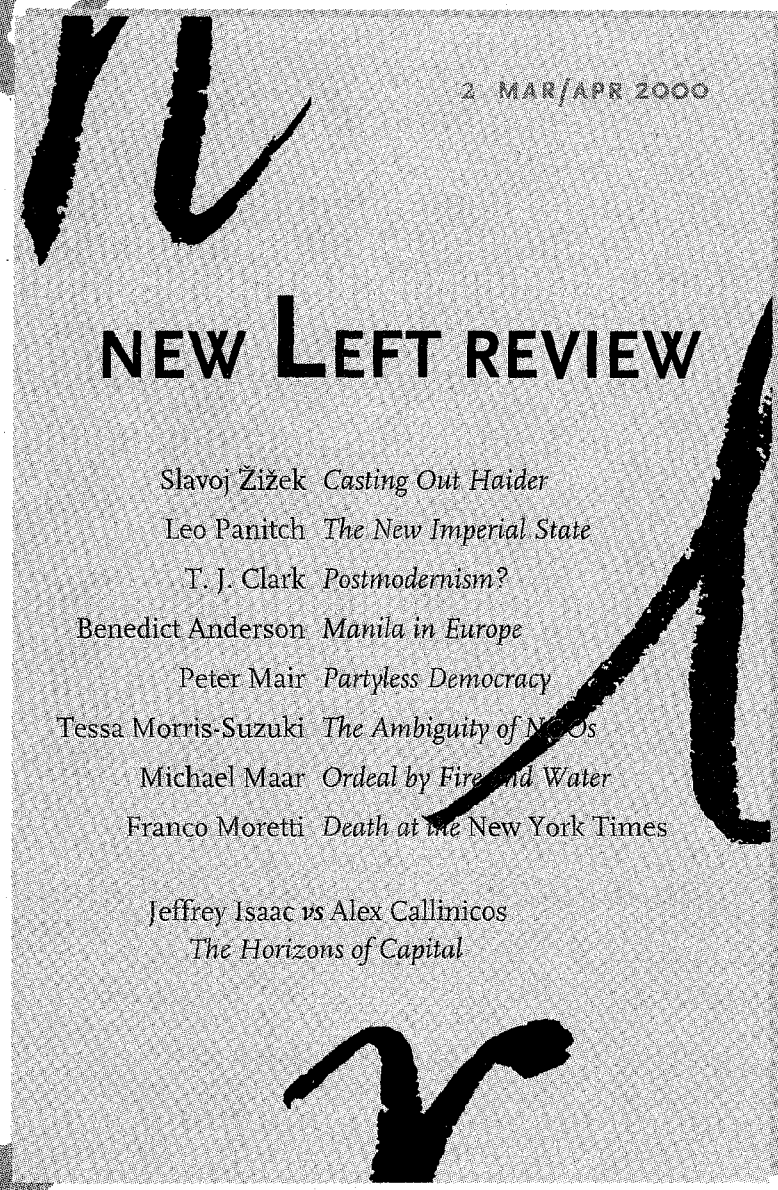
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